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The Nation.

February 1, 1986 $1.25; U.K. 65p

EDITORIAL

THE PEACE THREAT

The nice thing about the Soviet threat is that it supports almost any argument President Reagan wants to make to Congress or the American people. Why present the Nicaraguan *contras* (now politely called the UNOs, for the United Nicaraguan Opposition) with $100 million to overthrow the government? Why press on with Star Wars, fund the South Africa–Unita axis in Angola, increase Pentagon appropriations despite mandated Gramm-Rudman cuts? Why not? The Russians are impressed only by strength.

By the Administration's definition, every word out of Mikhail Gorbachev's mouth, every statement of policy or act of diplomacy from the Kremlin, is predicated on Soviet perceptions of American military machismo. Last year's summit in Geneva; the next summit, to be held in this country; the latest Soviet disarmament proposal; and probably the color of Gorbachev's tie are calibrated to the daily postings of Reagan's resolve. You can hear it now:

> "Comrade Secretary General, Reagan is asking Congress for more money for the Marine Corps Marching Band."
>
> "Oh-oh, Arbatov, we'd better not cheat on SALT II, and while you're up, spring another dissidentnik from the gulag."

Could it be more complicated than that? In the darkest cellars of the White House, they seem more worried about Moscow's pacifism than about its militarism. Gorbachev's sweeping disarmament proposal, perhaps the most comprehensive plan of its kind from a superpower since the end of World War II, has thrown policy-makers into embarrassed confusion. Reasonable people might conclude that it is more profitable to base policy on real compromise than imagined threats. But perhaps mad militarists are impressed only by madness.

MANILA THRILLER
Ninotchka Rosca

THE POLITICS OF CHANGE IN CHINA
Marie Gottschalk

LETTER FROM ALABAMA
Diane McWhorter

STATE PEN
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'THE COLOR PURPLE'
Andrew Kopkind

THE BISHOPS' SYNOD

THE THREE CHURCHES OF CATHOLICISM

T.M. PASCA

Vatican City

The Extraordinary Synod of Bishops held in Rome last December brought together representatives of all the national churches and exponents of all the conflicting currents of thought that are assailing Pope John Paul II's leadership. What did the Pope hope to gain by the meeting, and what was the result?

The synod, held between November 24 and December 8, was officially convened to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, which lasted from October 11, 1962, to December 8, 1965. Vatican II was a historic conclave, almost revolutionary: it called on the Catholic Church to come to terms with the contemporary world. The council was extremely well received by Catholics and non-Catholics alike. But in the past seven years, under John Paul II, its teachings have been quietly but systematically opposed and, wherever possible, rolled back by the Vatican.

The Second Vatican Council was the idea of Pope John XXIII, an old man whose life had spanned two world wars and who had considerable political and diplomatic experience. He was convinced that the church was failing in its mission because it had lost touch with twentieth-century realities. He favored détente over cold war, encouraged ecumenism and urged Christianity to adapt to cultures outside the faith's predominantly European traditions. It might be said that he turned the church upside down in order to set it on its feet.

The current Pope is in many ways his opposite. John Paul II is more like Pius X, who reigned from 1903 to 1914, a time of accelerating

(Continued on Page 112)

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LETTERS.

'DON'T PISS ON THEIR SHOES'

New York City

I was distressed by the trashing Nicholas Xenos gave the latest works by Michael Harrington and Irving Howe ["The Doldrums Duet," Nov. 16]. Had this review appeared almost anywhere but *The Nation*, I would have suspected that a political hit had been commissioned. As it is, a serious injustice has been done both authors.

It's obvious from the outset that Xenos doesn't like the books he is reviewing. It is equally clear that he doesn't like the authors. Perhaps that is why he fails to identify the two men as the movement makers they are, activist-intellectuals who for more than four decades have dedicated their lives to rebuilding American socialism. Having left out that crucial information, Xenos feels free to give us a picture of a pair of crotchety parlor pinks carping at just about everything on the American left since Gene Debs while glorifying European models and immigrant sensibilities. This is both silly and petty. Mike Harrington is probably the only figure on the left today who is equally welcome at a union convention or a campus rally. Irving Howe is a uniformly acknowledged advocate for the best traditions of democratic radicalism. Disagree with them, yes (as I have, often and strenuously, over the past twenty-five years), but don't piss on their shoes.

If Xenos had simply written, "Look, I think these guys are dead wrong and here's where I differ with them," it might have been a useful exercise. All that we get, however, are the wispiest hints of his politics: 1960s buzzwords like "participatory democracy," vague salutes to "insurrection" and the "notion of revolution," and a burning but fuzzy obsession with the size and relationships of contemporary representative political institutions (please, God, not *another* New Federalism).

Given such breathless but confusing preoccupations, perhaps Xenos in future might be engaged more productively in reviewing walls, not books. *Paul A. Du Brul*

XENOS REPLIES

Amherst, Mass.

Well, Paul A. Du Brul is right about one thing: I don't like the books. I won't rehearse the reasons I don't, but they involve the quality of the ideas expressed and, particularly, the authors' impoverished notions of radical politics and political theory. I do think it worth mentioning, however, that I find rather offensive Du Brul's implication that reviewers for *The Nation* are under some kind of obligation to treat books by venerable figures on the social democratic left differently from the way they might be treated in another publication.

I assume that readers of this magazine know who Irving Howe and Michael Harrington are. Undoubtedly, many of them will have formed opinions about these "activist-intellectuals" without any help or hindrance from me. As I mentioned in the review, given the fact that Harrington's book is a collection of essays that span his career, his public persona is more apparent in *Taking Sides* than Howe's is in *Socialism and America*. (Also, Harrington is unable to refrain from self-aggrandizement in the book's marginalia.) But my principal concern was to review the books, and my only gripe with the authors has to do with what they said in them, much of which they've both said elsewhere before. My obligation as a reviewer is to say what I think about the books, not to hand out slightly tarnished medals for services rendered to the socialist movement—even if I thought medals were deserved. *Nicholas Xenos*

UNION BLUES

Parsippany, N.J.

Stephen F. Diamond is off base in his appraisal of the decisions issued by the Reagan-appointed National Labor Relations Board and in his proposals to combat them ["No Friends in Labor's Court," Dec. 14]. Regarding the notorious *Bildisco* case, the board, composed of pre-Reagan appointees, ruled that a company could not void a union contract by filing for bankruptcy. The Supreme Court reversed the board on that matter. Further, the *Rossmore House* decision merely permits employers to question open and active union adherents about their support for unions. This hardly amounts to a denial of employees' right to organize, as it is unlikely that outspoken pro-union employees would be so easily intimidated.

Diamond would have been on much firmer ground if he had cited the board's decision in *Brigadier Industries Corp.*, which allows employers to ban union solicitation during working time even if the action is in direct response to an organizing campaign. He might also have mentioned board decisions, such as *Tri-Cast Inc.*, which allow employers to threaten employees that they will lose existing benefits if they vote for a union. Diamond also fails to comment on *Gourmet Foods*, in which the board held that it will not order an employer to recognize and bargain with a union, even if the company has committed the most atrocious unfair-labor practices, unless the union is able to sign up a majority of employees. In *St. Francis Hospital*, another key decision, the board made it more difficult for unions to organize in health-care institutions by refusing to direct elections unless unions agree to much larger voting units than were previously deemed appropriate.

It should also be noted that Diamond is plain wrong about unions' alleged utilization of the board's arbitration and conciliation machinery. The board has never possessed such machinery. Perhaps Diamond is referring to the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service?

Finally, I take strong exception to Diamond's proposal to protest the board's anti-labor decisions by flooding the regional offices with unfair-labor-practice charges. First of all, if the charges lack merit, they will be dismissed and will never be presented to the board. Second, why does Diamond seek to burden the dedicated professionals employed in the regional offices who are, by the way, represented by a union that opposes the policies of the Reagan Administration? Federal employees have it tough enough defending their own rights without having to deal with self-styled labor advocates foolishly attempting to increase their workload. *Bennett Muraskin*

DIAMOND REPLIES

Berkeley, Calif.

Bennett Muraskin is correct about the disposition of the *Bildisco* case, but does he really want to let the board off the hook about *Rossmore*? In his partial dissent in that case, pre-Reagan board appointee Don Zimmerman wrote that the decision to protect employers' interrogation of union supporters "ignores the reality that employers sometimes use subtle coercion during an organizing campaign and fails to recognize that even open union adherents may be intimidated by such coercion."

The four additional cases cited by Muraskin certainly lend weight to my argument. I am glad that he summarizes them for the readers. If *The Nation* were as well-financed as *Business Week* or *Fortune*, I might have had the space to discuss them.

To suggest that the board is not part of this nation's labor arbitration and conciliation machinery is simply naïve. Historically, the board had played a key role in deferring potential unfair-practice charges to the costly and more limited forum of arbitration. The current board has continued this tactic, in *Olin Corp.* and *United Technologies*.

I, too, am sympathetic to the Federal employees' workload. There is a simple solution: expand the board's staff. Management has not hesitated to pursue every loophole offered by the N.L.R.B. It is now up to the union movement to view the board as one additional arena of conflict. To suggest, as Muraskin does, that unions should judge a priori the merit of potential unfair-practice charges is to reverse the union's role as the representative of its rank and file. The question of merit should be raised in the forum offered by the board, with union members able to rely on their organizations to articulate their grievances. *Stephen F. Diamond*

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EDITORIALS.

The March Goes On

The phenomenal public celebration of the first Martin Luther King Day was both a tribute to a martyred hero and a contest for his memory. The ceremonies in Atlanta, Bishop Tutu's benediction, the television special hosted by Stevie Wonder, the network pre-emptions, the dozens of state and municipal observances, the hundreds of parades and church services and political appearances, and the countless comments in the nation's media gave the holiday the character of a historic event with a particular purpose, like a Presidential inaugura- tion or a Super Bowl game. It seemed as if life would somehow be different on Tuesday from what it was on Sunday, that Monday was not simply a national "pause," as *The New York Times* headline put it, but a culmination and a point of passage.

What makes King's birthday different from every other national holiday is that it is part of the unfinished social movement it is meant to honor. The campaign to establish the holiday began almost eighteen years ago, when King was killed, and took on many of the attributes of a civil rights project. Scorned by racists, ignored or patronized by many whites, exploited by some politicians and attacked by others, the dogged campaign for one man's remembrance

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became a movement for black recognition and, as such, a bid for social empowerment. President Reagan's reluctant signing of the bill that established the holiday last year was a victory wrung from him by forces he could not contain. It recalled President Lyndon Johnson's dramatic appearance before a joint session of Congress one night in 1965, at the end of King's long and bloody campaign for voting rights in Alabama. "We shall overcome," Johnson said solemnly as he introduced the civil rights bill demanded by those he had spent a lifetime putting off. Life was different the next day—not because a President spoke or Congress acted but because a new force could feel its power.

The stroke of Reagan's pen, like the phrase in Johnson's speech, merely marked the end of one short phase of the epic struggle of black people for equality in America. The "white power structure" which King used to speak of in the 1960s is still impervious to the aspirations of most black people, and the larger social system remains dedicated to the preservation of privilege for those at the top. In the course of the long drive, no single success is unalloyed. The addition of a "black holiday" to the national calendar was a concession to an underprivileged community, but it was also an attempt at co-optation, another quaint locution from an earlier political generation. Just as the various pieces of civil rights legislation in the 1960s were designed to avert social conflict as well as to harmonize political interests, this latest civil rights token is clearly seen by many as the specie of social appeasement.

In his lifetime, Martin Luther King occupied two different and sometimes contradictory positions. He was a leader of blacks, particularly Southern blacks; and he was a leader of whites, particularly white liberals. Blacks followed him because he expressed their vision of equality and hope for power, and whites admired him because he pointed the way toward national reconciliation. Nearly two decades after his death, King's separate roles were reflected in the ways his memory was invoked and his holiday observed. Some spoke of him as a fighter, others as a healer. Senator Robert Dole called him a "drum major for justice and peace," and an unidentified woman on the radio called him "the scourge of God." If you listened to the network commentators, you would think that King's strategy of nonviolent protest consisted only of singing and marching and sitting down on the ground. But if you talked to people who were in Selma and Birmingham and southwest Georgia, you would hear tales of bloody battles and midnight murders, the consequences of state repression and white violence that the strategy of peace provoked.

With the first observance of his holiday, Martin Luther King passed officially into national mythology. But the meaning of his life and his work is still open to interpretation. There is no official canon, not yet. And there is no better way to make his life relevant to our future and to keep alive the movement he led than to consider again the issues he raised.

COMING UP
Did Truman Tap "The Cork"?
Kai Bird and Max Holland

Of Laws, Not Men

On the eve of the thirteenth anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, leaders of church and state extended their blessings to those who defy both the Supreme Court's 1973 decision guaranteeing women's right to abortion and the frequently expressed pro-choice views of the majority of Americans.

President Reagan did his part by proclaiming January 19 Sanctity of Human Life Day. To Reagan, human life means fetal life, not the life of Nicaraguans, the homeless or children who have the bad luck to be born to mothers on public assistance. New York City's Archbishop, John Cardinal O'Connor, went even further. In a pastoral letter which New York priests read at Sunday mass, O'Connor called the Supreme Court decision "an act of raw judicial power" and instructed Catholics to set aside several hours on January 22 and on the twenty-second of every subsequent month to express "solidarity with the unborn" through prayer.

But the Cardinal doesn't rely on prayer alone; he also told New Yorkers to lobby their elected representatives against abortion. To help them in that task, postcards urging Governor Mario Cuomo to forbid Medicaid funding of abortions in New York State were handed out in some churches. Congregants were asked to sign the cards, which church officials would then mail to the Governor. That's heavy-duty politicking for a tax-exempt organization, but all in a day's service of the Lord for the spiritual leader of New York's 6.6 million Catholics. Having cut his political teeth with his vicious assault on Geraldine Ferraro in 1984, the Cardinal is ready to go after the rest of the women who dare disobey him.

Neither the President nor the Cardinal has personally planted a bomb at an abortion clinic, jeered at a woman seeking birth control or copied down license plate numbers outside a facility in order to harass staff and clients at home. But their statements this week reassure the people who do such things that the highest men in the land stand behind them. The zealots convicted in last year's Christmas bombing of a clinic in Pensacola, Florida, felt sure of that.

But while Reagan mollifies his right wing and O'Connor advances his career, most Americans continue to believe that abortion, especially in the first trimester, should be legal. In referendums last year in heavily Catholic Bristol, Connecticut, and in Dover and Derry, New Hampshire, a majority of voters supported free choice. And the majority is beginning to fight back. As part of a campaign labeled Silent No More, NARAL, the National Abortion Rights Action League, elicited 20,000 letters and testimonials from women who have had abortions. The Ameri-

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can Civil Liberties Union has recently published a pamphlet, *Preserving the Right to Choose*, which offers staff members of clinics advice on how to deal with violence and disruption.

We reaffirm our belief that women's right to choose abortion is central to other freedoms, and we deplore the way the President, the Cardinal and the clinic bombers have forced us to keep fighting a battle we won long ago. Thirteen years after *Roe v. Wade*, it's time to move on to other issues. How wonderful it would be not to have to write this editorial again on January 22, 1987.

Manila Thriller

Manila

The presidential campaign enters its final days; the almost festive atmosphere is punctuated by shootings, bombings and dirty tricks. Volunteers for opposition candidate Corazon Aquino stand on street corners in suburban Makati with placards that read, "A Peso for Cory" and are bombarded by coins and bills tossed from passing buses, trucks, cars and jitneys. The tiny contributions are an act of desperation in this poverty-stricken land, where the prevailing sentiment is "Anyone but Marcos." Against the spontaneous outpouring of money for Aquino is arrayed the $500 million war chest of President Ferdinand Marcos, which knowledgeable observers suspect was recently augmented by the sale of overseas properties purportedly under the control of Marcos's wife, Imelda. Despite the wealth and entrenched power of the Marcos political machine, the ruling K.B.L. Party is finding the going tough. Marcos's campaign has attracted a lackluster public response and has brought the issue of his precarious health into the spotlight.

The February 7 election is one of the most unusual ever held in this country, whose electoral process has been putty in the hands of the ruling politicians. The decision to hold it was made under pressure from the United States, subject to the whim of the nation's chief executive. The candidates were chosen by power brokers; the results are almost impossible to predict. Filipinos wile away the time remaining before the election discussing questions like, Can Marcos cheat on the vast scale necessary for him to win? Would Aquino be allowed to take office if she garnered sufficient votes? Will the elections even be held? (There are rumors that Marcos's health problems will give him a pretext to cancel the polling.) With such speculations uppermost in voters' minds, little attention is being paid to the issues, such as how either candidate would deal with the country's desperate economic situation, its widespread poverty, its $26 billion foreign debt. Instead, the campaign debate has focused on Marcos's charges that his opponents are Communists. It is as though the people's sense of euphoria over having any opposition candidate at all has blinded them to fundamental questions.

Although it is a fresh breeze in the miasma created by twenty years of Marcos's corrupt and tyrannical rule, the opposition ticket had a questionable genesis. Early on, Aquino told the opposition coalition Bayan that she wouldn't work with it, thus depriving her campaign of the knowledge and energies of some fifty "cause-oriented" groups. (Bayan's affiliates use the term to distinguish themselves from traditional parties dominated by a single personality.) Then she decided to run under the banner of Unido, the party of conservative Salvador Laurel, causing considerable unhappiness among members of her late husband's populist Laban Party. Laurel was chosen as her running mate even though there were other qualified opposition leaders, without the burden of public distrust he carries because of his silence during the Marcos years. The Aquino-Laurel union was supposed to have been cemented by Jaime Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, at a meeting with the two candidates early last December. According to subsequent reports (never denied), however, U.S. Ambassador Stephen Bosworth was also present at the meeting and played a decisive role.

The key American role in the Aquino-Laurel candidacy has led the K.B.L. into a ludicrous position. On the one hand, Marcos rages at his opponents' alleged Communist ties; on the other, his henchmen denounce the ticket's purported subservience to the United States. Few Filipinos have even noticed the contradiction. The Marcos strategy of Red-baiting—an appeal to the strong anti-Communist sentiments among Philippine voters—may backfire, though. As one Filipino put it, "Feelings against Marcos are so intense that anything he attacks begins to look good." What is surprising is that Aquino has reacted defensively to the charges, promising not to appoint Communists to her Cabinet. She has offered amnesty to members of the revolutionary National Peoples Army who lay down their arms, but her supporters on the left wonder why she says nothing about her plans for the Philippine Armed Forces, which have brought so much suffering to her own family.

For all the wild punches being thrown by the gladiators in this latest "thriller from Manila," one can see the elements of a quasi-reformist government being put into place. The signs include the citizens' election watch reluctantly accredited by the Commission on Elections, the agitation for a free election by the formerly pro-Marcos trade unions (which might have been prompted by American pressure), the recognition by one faction of the military that there is a difference between obeying the Constitution and obeying the commander in chief, the defections of prominent pro-Marcos politicians. The question is, Can Marcos be outmaneuvered at every step of the election process by the reformers? And would a reformist administration set up to safeguard foreign interests have the will to attack the country's deep-seated problems? The plight of the man who digs into his pockets for a worn bill to toss out a bus window is desperate, and a negative answer to that question is a virtual guarantee of a revolution.

NINOTCHKA ROSCA

Ninotchka Rosca is a journalist from the Philippines and author of Bitter Country *and* The Monsoon Collection *(distributed by Columbia University Press).*

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Web of 'Intrigue'

The Gorbachev surprise, his most imaginative political move thus far, came just one day after Kenneth Adelman, director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, was telling reporters in Washington that "the ball is in their court" and that the Russians "owe us a complete response." On January 15, the Soviet Embassy delivered Gorbachev's latest proposals for arms control and disarmament.

The proposals took the Reagan Administration, the press and, no doubt, the "intelligence community" entirely by surprise. They included a three-month extension of the Soviet moratorium on testing, discussed here two weeks ago. Gorbachev invited the United States to join the moratorium and then enlarged on a program leading to total nuclear disarmament by the year 2000. The most substantive and important element was the extension of the self-imposed unilateral nuclear test ban which, absent U.S. agreement to stop testing as well, was to have ended on December 31. Secondly, by insisting more strongly than ever on their willingness to accept "verification," on site or by satellites, seismometers and other means, the Russians seem determined to prevent the United States from raising verification quibbles to counter their invitation to join the moratorium. Beyond this, Gorbachev opened avenues for negotiation on the issue of European missiles. Despite some concessionary language on space weapons research, everything was made contingent on the United States joining the test ban and ending its space weapons program, otherwise known as S.D.I.

Forty-eight hours before the Russians made public their first moratorium offer, on July 29, they had alerted the Reagan Administration, thus giving it time to prepare its response and persuade a compliant U.S. press corps that nothing more consequential than traditional Soviet propaganda was at issue. On January 15, given only brief reaction time, the Administration was caught flat-footed, and in the end had to be rescued from Presidential expressions of "gratitude" to Gorbachev by journalists with greater experience in the instant production of the red herring, the non sequitur and the lie.

The immediate reaction of the "Western diplomats" to whom U.S. correspondents in Moscow rushed for comment was predictable. The supposedly new Soviet positions were "based mostly on existing Soviet positions." These same diplomats were "intrigued" by "tantalizing glimpses" of a new Soviet position on intermediate arms reduction in Europe. There were some other old chestnuts: the Gorbachev offer was "an attempt to seize the public relations initiative"; and the "Soviet tests would not have been scheduled before spring" anyway. Caspar Weinberger even attempted the straightforward lie that the Russians never test before April. In the past three years they have conducted tests in February and March.

None of this had much sinew, as President Reagan, with his keen sense of what will sell and what will not, speedily realized. So he stuck with fervent expressions of gratitude to Gorbachev for some fine ideas, saying this was the first time anyone had actually suggested getting rid of nuclear weapons. But while the President was taking the high road of gratitude and his officials were continuing to say numbly how intrigued they were, the press took a tougher line. *The Washington Post* editorial for January 17 said, with a most judicious sense of balance, that the Gorbachev plan "is appealing to the great popular anxiety about nuclear war from which Mr. Reagan's vision of S.D.I. also flows." (This came shortly after reports that space-based laser weapons might have the offensive capacity to incinerate cities.) The editorial laconically denounced the Soviet "utopian promise of a nuclear-free world and . . . its appeal for a test ban, which is *something of a distraction* from the priorities of negotiating arms reductions and strengthening the stability of the forces that remain." (My italics.)

On the same day Leslie Gelb had an artful analysis in *The New York Times*, genuflecting toward the Reagan Administration, whose negotiating "approach," he said, is "built around the introduction of defenses as most offensive forces are destroyed." This is pure flackery for Star Wars. Gelb then said, accurately, that the Gorbachev proposal presents a problem for America because the idea of a nuclear-free Europe runs entirely counter to NATO strategy, which is based on the deployment of nuclear weapons and a refusal to renounce "first use." Over on the opinion page Flora Lewis, whose hasty briefing session with U.S. officials one could all too easily imagine, struck a forceful pose from her opening sentence: "Mikhail Gorbachev has gone too far in his effort to arouse Western public opinion." Lewis's column was a cold war classic, from its misrepresentation of the Baruch plan of 1946, to the invocation of Gorbachev's "vague but repeated verification ideas," to the introduction of Afghanistan as a necessary element in linkage before the Russians could be taken seriously. Two days later the lead *Times* editorial dismissed Gorbachev's vision of a nuclear-free world as ridiculous and ignored the substantive issues of the test ban and verification.

All in all, the press reaction demonstrated more clearly than ever that important members of the opinion-forming elite, notably *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, have fallen in step with the Reagan Administration in belittling the importance of test bans—ultimately a comprehensive test ban—as the most direct and certain way of slowing the arms race. The alternative to the test ban is the "talk-test-build" syndrome, which produced ten successful arms control negotiations in the 1970s while the United States and the Soviet Union tripled their nuclear arsenals. Of all the articles I read on the issue (though WBAI had some excellent coverage), only Fred Kaplan's in *The Boston Globe* for January 19 said flatly that a nuclear test ban was the one element in the Gorbachev package that could be put into effect immediately, and that the reason the Reagan Administration rejects a ban is because it wants to develop new

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

types of weapons. (Kaplan also quoted some prominent nuclear scientists and engineers as having assured Jimmy Carter in 1978 that nuclear testing is not necessary to assure the reliability of the existing nuclear arsenal. The Reaganauts are always trotting out the reliability argument as a rationale for rejecting a nuclear test ban.)

So: the crucial element in the Gorbachev proposal is the nuclear test ban, and now the U.S. peace movement has three unexpected months to try to stress its importance. The Administration will talk about Geneva, about summits, and will do nothing, unless given a powerful shove by public opinion and by Congress, the former, one hopes, acting upon the latter. At a press conference on January 17, representatives of SANE and the freeze movement, among others, welcomed the Soviet proposal. In Congress, peace groups are pushing for a "sense of the House" resolution (H.J.Res.3) urging Reagan to resume negotiations for a comprehensive test ban. SANE and others are also lobbying for a House bill (H.R.3442) put up by Pat Schroeder of Colorado, urging the Administration to join the test ban and, in the likely event it refuses, cutting off funds for nuclear weapons tests for six months. Any hope of movement in the House in this election year obviously depends on a reactivation of the grass-roots energies of 1982, directed, above all, to the specific issue of a nuclear test ban. Not needed is the prudent vagueness of ProPeace's call, as the group prepares for its long, costly march from Los Angeles, to "take them down." Reagan could say yes to that without a qualm. "Ban Testing Now" is a simple enough slogan to remember and to argue for in the days ahead.

Foot-in-Mouth Disease

The PEN congress was pretty awful and *The New York Times* used it as the occasion of coverage worthy of *Encounter* in the most florid hours of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. (Walter Goodman and John Gross were there to provide continuity.) Norman Mailer made an ass of himself. Of course, he often has in the past, but there was occasionally a largeness to his antics and to his words and thoughts that made one forgive and, at least in my case, sometimes to admire. But the last decade has made him considerably more mean-spirited. What is one to make of someone who expounded on the supposed liberality of views of his invitee George Shultz on the very day that Shultz's Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Elliott Abrams, was calling for the invasion of Nicaragua on the *Times* Op-Ed page. As the week progressed, Mailer's foot leaped toward his mouth with the precision of a heat-seeking missile. By Friday, the day I attended the proceedings, everything about him was clenched right up to his hair, as he denounced the left for being "avatars of entropy." Too many dinners on the Upper East Side, I fear. He is surely ripe for outright public conversion to Neoconnery, lining up beside Saul Bellow, who, in answer to Günter Grass, made deprecating mention of "pockets of poverty" in the United States. So much for the 33.7 million below the poverty line and the forcing, since 1981, of between 20 and 25 percent of all American farmers off their land.

Quite the trickiest operator at the conference was Mario Vargas Llosa, who drew a virtuous line in the sand between himself and that majority of Latin American writers who, in his opinion, would cheerfully vote for totalitarianism. Gabriel García Márquez, said Vargas Llosa finally, is nothing more than a "courtesan" of Fidel Castro. I rushed to the press conference, hoping to ask him how he squared this audacious bandying about of the word "courtesan" with his own labors for the Peruvian government. Vargas Llosa, as you may recall, headed an official government commission that exonerated the Peruvian military from a massacre of Peruvian journalists. "Courtesan" would seem to have been an overly polite word for his role in that affair. But he had hurried from the room.

I'm afraid the audience preferred Vargas Llosa's posturing to the speeches of Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Bruno Kreisky. Both these men were—as befits their profession—markedly more cultured and serious than most of their literary counterparts. Kreisky, my favorite social democrat, gave a well-reasoned disquisition on the state's "imagination" of "terrorism," and of welfare and full employment, and was forthwith treated to abusive harangues by both Cynthia Ozick and Ronald Radosh because he had met with Yasir Arafat and Muammar el-Qaddafi. Ozick appears, in outlook, to share the views of Meir Kahane, without the latter's honesty of expression.

The *Times* PEN team, so zealous to interview writers from Eastern Europe and to quote Vargas Llosa's complaint that there was not as much protest against Amadou M'Bow as against Shultz, found no time to interview the great Palestinian poet Mahmud Darwish, who would no doubt have had as many interesting things to say about the imagination of the state as Vassily Aksyonov or Amos Oz. Some states are imagined less keenly than others. At the end of the week my brother dug up the BBC's first report, at 6 P.M. on Monday, August 6, 1945, of the dropping of the A-bomb on Hiroshima. This newscast seemed a good example of how the state's imagination can work, given half a chance:

> Here is the News:
>
> President Truman has announced a tremendous achievement by Allied scientists. They have produced the atomic bomb. One has already been dropped on a Japanese army base. It alone contained as much explosive power as two-thousand of our great ten-tonners. The President has also foreshadowed the enormous peace-time value of this harnessing of atomic energy.
>
> At home, it's been a Bank Holiday of thunderstorms as well as sunshine: a record crowd at Lord's has seen Australia make 265 for 5 wickets.

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CAPITOL LETTER.

KAI BIRD AND MAX HOLLAND

■ Strategic Superiority Initiative

A venerable truth among Washington journalists has it that if one is curious about what is being done in the name of national security, the best place to go for frank answers is the Pentagon. The Central Intelligence Agency can't be trusted, the State Department is at best disingenuous and the National Security Council is too protective of the President. Naturally, the top political appointees at the Pentagon do not receive high marks for honesty, but ask a mid-level official a question and more often than not the answer is disarmingly candid.

Last month one of those obscure officials, Assistant Director for Systems John Gardner, made a simple but important observation about Star Wars. Gardner has labored for almost three decades in the often sparse vineyards of strategic defense, both inside and outside the Pentagon. Prior to joining the Defense Department he worked for more than twenty years in McDonnell Douglas's astronautics division, designing missile-defense systems. He then moved to the Pentagon, becoming the U.S. official responsible for all strategic defense systems, and is now one of the half-dozen assistant directors who run the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization. He reports directly to the S.D.I.O. chief, Lieut. Gen. James A. Abrahamson, on the overall "architecture" of the ballistic missile defense system.

Gardner's views on Star Wars support Soviet criticism that it is not simply a defense against nuclear war, as Ronald Reagan claims. The Russians charge that it masks a desire to return to the situation that existed in the 1950s and 1960s, when the United States had nuclear superiority. In a speech in Washington last December before the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Gardner, in effect, said that the Russians are right: Star Wars does not have as its sole objective the creation of a protective shield. The program is also trying, he said, "to put [the United States] in a position so that we can fairly significantly change our strategic military strategy."

Although Gardner affirmed S.D.I.'s ostensible raison d'être, he spent the greater part of his presentation describing the "intriguing" results of a number of computer-simulated nuclear exchanges his agency conducted with a hypothetical ballistic missile system in place. He explained:

> What happens . . . is that as defenses are introduced on both sides, both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. side, the net result of this exchange is fairly sharply in favor of the U.S. Now, one of the primary and driving reasons why this is so is because the forces of the two sides are fairly asymmetric. The Soviet Union has much more of its forces invested in ballistic missiles, the U.S. has much more of its forces invested in air-breathing forces relatively; and as you turn up the gain on the defense against ballistic missiles, what happens is that the situation moves from fairly sharply against us at no ballistic missile defense to fairly sharply in our favor with ballistic missile defenses.

For all his candor, Gardner did not give his audience the full story. He mentioned that all the S.D.I.O. nuclear exchange calculations proceeded on the assumption that the Soviet Union had initiated a nuclear attack. That assumption is understandable from the Pentagon's point of view, but the Russians have undoubtedly run the same drills on the premise that America attacks first (after all, unlike the Soviet Union, the United States has yet to make a no-first-strike pledge). Their tests probably show that an American first strike would result in an even greater disparity between each side's "ensemble military capability" to respond, so it is no wonder they consider Star Wars an offensive threat of the first magnitude.

Among other experts, John Pike of the Federation of American Scientists considers Gardner's speech to be the most striking admission about Star Wars by an informed Pentagon official. But Star Wars, with a budget of $2.7 billion for the current fiscal year, is only part of the assault the Reagan Administration has mounted against strategic parity with the Soviet Union.

■ Tipping the Balance

Last month the press reported that the chief of naval operations, Adm. James D. Watkins, suggested using U.S. naval forces to "alter the nuclear equation" in favor of the United States if a conventional war with the Soviet Union broke out. U.S. forces would seek to attack Soviet submarines carrying nuclear missiles, destroying a reserve force the Russians consider crucial to the maintenance of nuclear equivalence.

Concurrently, R&D Associates, one of the dozens of think tanks under contract to the S.D.I.O., produced a report positing that lasers deployed as part of the Star Wars umbrella against Soviet missiles might have another purpose: incinerating cities. "The lasers can be employed in a manner not contemplated by the [Strategic Defense Initiative]," said the eight-page report. "Specifically, they can be targeted against the same entities they were designed to protect: the cities."

For a crowning touch, the Administration is racked with a major internal debate about the advisability of adhering to present arms control treaties with the Soviet Union. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger recently submitted a report to the President citing numerous Soviet "violations" and calling for the retention of weapons scheduled to be dismantled. Almost simultaneously, the Senate Armed Services Committee released an unclassified version of testimony given last February by Lieut. Gen. John Chain, then the State Department's Director of Politico-Military Affairs. Chain bluntly asserted that the Russians have complied "with the large majority of the treaties."

All these tactics will have a consequence that should be apparent to even the defense-minded in the Pentagon, like Gardner. The attempt to regain lost strategic advantage will undermine mutual assured destruction, otherwise known as deterrence. Reagan's policy makes it more likely that one of those nuclear exchanges the Pentagon likes to practice will not be simulated.

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ARTICLES.

BEYOND ECONOMIC REFORM

The Politics of Change in China

MARIE GOTTSCHALK

Time's selection of Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping as 1985's Man of the Year has overshadowed the more somber assessments coming from Beijing in the past few months about the state of China's economic reforms. The hullabaloo created first in China and then abroad over the reform movement and its "success" has thus far left politicians, academics and journalists in the West either unwilling or unable to take a more realistic and hardheaded look at what is happening in the People's Republic. For too long, the central issue of the relation between the economic reforms and China's political development has been off-limits for serious debate.

Without a doubt, China's expanding economic program has been the nation's most important initiative since the death of the Great Helmsman, Mao Zedong, in 1976. Some of the icons of the new policies are dramatic. Maxim's, the posh French restaurant and disco, opens a branch in Beijing. Peasants in the countryside boast of owning television sets, tape recorders and motorcycles. Fashion designer Pierre Cardin uses the Great Wall as a runway for Chinese models elegantly dressed in clothes that cost more than ten times what the average peasant earns in a year.

No doubt, these are remarkable breaks from the past. So far, though, the reform movement has been evaluated with too narrow a criterion. Many Western experts have focused on a single aspect of it: the success of Deng's campaign to weed out "ultraleft Maoists" from the party, the army and the government. The party's continuing campaign to cleanse itself, the resignation early last year of forty top leaders of the People's Liberation Army and the retirement last September of nearly half the Politburo's members offer ample evidence of Deng's ability to remove unwelcome holdovers. No one should conclude, however, that the future of the reforms depends merely on Deng's winning this ideological war.

Once Deng and his supporters finish battling the ultraleftists, they will find themselves facing the problem that has plagued China and other developing nations for decades, what many scholars call the crisis of authority. The basic conundrum in China's development remains the same one that China scholar Lucien Pye outlined nearly twenty years ago: How can China create forms of authority in its politics and society that both satisfy the nation's historic need for self-confidence and also provide a foundation for "reordering their society in modern terms"?

Any serious look at the economic reforms must do more than cite statistics for record harvests and rising per capita income. It must answer a fundamental question: Will greater freedom and competition in the economic sphere increase tensions in the political sphere? Put another way, Will emerging political problems create an authority crisis in China?

At this point, the significant question to ask about the future course of Chinese politics is not, Will there be democracy? It is, Can China develop the ability to recognize political conflict and disagreement as legitimate, thus avoiding the extreme fluctuations that have characterized Chinese politics in the past? To begin to answer that question, one must identify the political strains that the economic reforms are likely to produce.

The rehabilitation of Deng Xiaoping after the Cultural Revolution, along with that of his protégés Premier Zhao Ziyang and General Secretary Hu Yaobang, marked the triumph of one set of leaders over another after a twenty-year conflict about the direction of China's future. Although that debate was waged in a sometimes diplomatic, sometimes brutal manner, the opponents agreed on one point: whoever came out on top would determine the course of change in China.

The transformations that have taken place since Mao's death reflect the will of those in power rather than the irrepressible demands of the people. Many of the reforms have weak institutional roots. Their future depends heavily on the durability of the current leaders. That is why the im-

DRAWINGS BY MONICA INCISA

Marie Gottschalk lived in China from 1981 to 1983. She recently returned from a monthlong visit there.

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polite question, But what if Deng should die tomorrow? is often met with nervous silence in China.

No matter how likable, hardy and "capitalistic" 81-year-old Deng is made to appear in the Western media, historian R.H. Tawney's description of Chinese politics a half-century ago is still appropriate today. "Political forces in China resemble rivers," he wrote. "The pressure on the dykes is enormous, but unseen; it is only when they burst that the strain is realized."

At the special party conference convened this fall, outsiders got a rare glimpse of that enormous pressure. With Deng just seats away, Chen Yun, a powerful member of the Politburo, rose to make a scathing critique of China's economic program. Quoting his longtime ally Mao, this 80-year-old veteran of Chinese political battles warned that the People's Republic was flirting with "social disorder" as it continued to open its economy to the caprices of market forces.

The future of the reforms hinges on many complex factors—some of them, like the weather, entirely beyond government control. Record harvests in 1979, spurred on by exceptionally good weather, overinflated the success of the rural reforms and helped buoy the movement. A series of bad harvests now could touch off a violent backlash against China's current leaders and be used by a new group as a pretext to take power. Since the ruling circle has staked its legitimacy on the continuing success of the reforms, subsequent leaders might have to establish their legitimacy by discarding many of today's changes. Just last month officials announced that the 1985 grain harvest will probably fall more than 50 million tons short of 1984's record crop. It would be the largest one-year drop since the Communists came to power, in 1949.

Although the Chinese leadership has begun to question the relevance of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought to China, it has not challenged the relevance of the party. For all its faults, the party remains the nation's most durable institution. The wave of reform is a curious blend of centralization and decentralization which leaves the party members on the top and the peasants on the bottom, squeezing the cadres and functionaries in the middle.

Since 1949, this middle layer has served as the most important link between the people and the leadership. Now the central government is asking middle- and low-level cadres to implement policies that, if successful, could leave them with far less power than they are accustomed to wielding. As one cadre candidly remarked, "If you assign households full responsibility for task completion . . . how am I going to eat?" As the peasants gain more economic freedom, the cadres lose considerable power over them. In many instances cadres are no longer ordering the kind of work to be done or deciding how favors, resources and funds should be distributed.

Cadres are also losing their "extra-administrative" powers, many of which the peasants long resented. Local leaders cannot requisition labor, tools and produce for their own use as easily as they once did. Some cadres, however, have been able to take advantage of the reforms. They exploit bottlenecks in the supply system and are not above taking bribes or using their "backdoor connections" to corner the market in scarce resources such as diesel oil, fertilizer and farm tools.

Peasants are actively resisting encroachments and abuses by local officials. Where there have been conflicts over the distribution of water, land, tools and animals, peasants have been known to produce their title deeds from the pre-1949 period and divide up the land "as it was years ago." Sometimes they have even destroyed state-owned property—buildings, tools, equipment—that they have been prevented from taking over privately.

Ironically, the local officials remain the greatest hope for, and pose the greatest threat to, the reform program. The new system, which has no other institutions to fall back on, must depend on the party. Rural cadres are still the most important check on the peasants, who may be "getting carried away with their new freedom," as one Western scholar explained.

There certainly have been numerous examples of abuse. Peasants have expropriated public land and have raided local factories for supplies to build new houses. The housing boom, which is reaching unprecedented proportions in the countryside, has swept up more and more of China's scarce arable land and tiny reserve of forests. Peasants, sometimes in cahoots with local cadres, often report that good grain is spoiled and then sell it on the black market. Some peasants also falsify accounts and cultivate secret plots. A brief visit to a free market and a state-run store leaves one with little doubt about where the best produce ends up for sale.

The leadership has increasingly tried to bind peasants with formal, written contracts stipulating what crops are to be raised and how much of the harvest peasants must turn over to the collective and the state. It is unclear, however, just how binding those contracts are. Despite recent attempts to strengthen legal codes, Chinese law remains embryonic, imprecise and often capricious. Although the number of law schools has grown in the past few years, the nation has only an estimated 10,000 part- and full-time lawyers serving more than a billion people.

As the nation expands its legal system, it is being forced to acknowledge more of its citizens' legal rights, many of which were either grossly ignored or trampled on in the past. From the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, five decades ago, law and politics have been virtually identical in the People's Republic. In moving to differentiate between the two, the nation may unleash a demand for broader individual rights, which will be followed by a government crackdown. The Democracy Wall movement is a case in point. In 1978, with the central government's unofficial sanction, human rights activists began plastering a wall in Beijing with posters calling for greater freedom. After several months the movement ended officially, as some leading activists were convicted of being counterrevolutionaries and were sentenced to long prison terms after secret trials.

Just as the implementation of reforms has fostered disputes between peasants and local leaders, so it has raised tensions between local leaders and Beijing. The central

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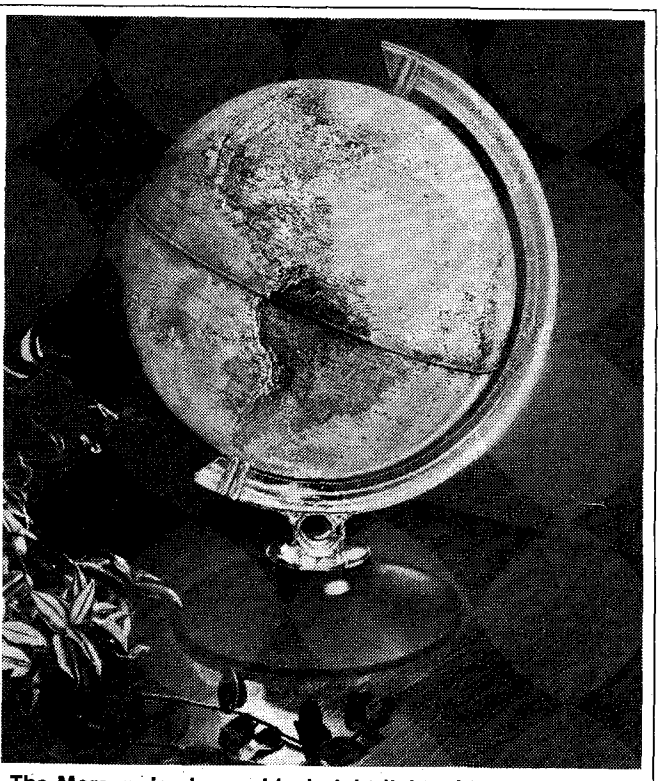

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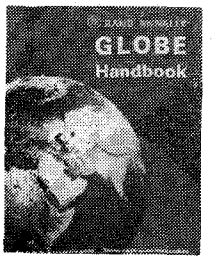

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government is walking a tightrope, trying to encourage greater decentralization while maintaining a comprehensive state plan that unambiguously upholds Beijing's position as the final arbiter.

Successful local endeavors sometimes prove to be more disruptive of the leadership's designs than local failures. As rural industries expand beyond their own regions, their demands are likely to conflict with economic priorities set down by the planners in Beijing. The arguments that have erupted so far between the central government and local leaders over raw materials, investments and distribution of products and surplus will probably increase.

The recent reforms have also fostered tensions between the party and the army. Next to the Communist Party, the army, or P.L.A., has been the hardiest institution in China. The party has expected soldiers to play a valuable ideological and organizational role; in return for their loyalty, they receive favored treatment in obtaining party membership, cadre positions, jobs and education. The economic reform movement, which began shortly after civilian leadership re-emerged in China following the Cultural Revolution, directly threatens the army's privileged position.

The P.L.A. has many pragmatic reasons for opposing the changes. Under the new "responsibility system," which rewards those households that produce the most, families with sons or daughters in the army are at an economic disadvantage. With fewer children available to work on family plots and in household enterprises, they are likely to be less financially well-off than other families. Ninety percent of the P.L.A.'s rank and file comes from the villages.

Although the recent shake-ups and retirements in the army attest to Deng's strength in reducing the army's role in Chinese politics, his efforts could quickly be reversed. The military still dominates sensitive border regions. Three years ago Beijing reinstated the army as the prime decision-maker for the economic development of Xinjiang, the giant province on the Chinese-Soviet border. An estimated 130,000 to 300,000 P.L.A. troops still occupy Tibet. Any flare-up with China's neighbors or with its restive Moslem and Tibetan minorities in these provinces could greatly enhance the military's power.

The current leadership faces what has been a centuries-old dilemma for China: the great income disparities that result from the wide differences around the country in natural and human endowments. As the central government relinquishes its control over local production, it will become increasingly limited in its ability to play Robin Hood. Some have contended that the recent reforms have raised the nation's "threshold of tolerance for inequality."

Defending the changes, a top agricultural researcher argued that all the peasants would stay poor if the more successful ones were held back. "So some peasants have become better off first and the others will be helped to catch up with the goal of achieving common prosperity," he explained. The question remains, though, whether the party and the government have lost the ability, if not the will, to help the less prosperous, less productive areas of China. As the peasants become richer and less subject to the cadres' economic levers, communities are having difficulty inducing them to pay local taxes for the services of teachers and health workers ("barefoot doctors") as well as for projects such as drilling wells and building schools. Also, less money has been available at the local level to cover the "Five Guarantees"—food, clothing, shelter, health care and cremation for the aged, infirm, poor, handicapped and orphaned.

The contrasts within villages, or between cities and the surrounding countryside, have not as yet become glaring, so the present inequalities have not been widely challenged. But if the peasants are allowed to move about more freely in the future, China's very poor may become more discontented and rebellious, seeing the great gap between them and the groups that have prospered.

In giving away some of its economic prerogatives, the government may also lose some of its power to enforce its birth control program. The plan has depended on strict adherence to draconian measures that deeply touch the local and personal affairs of the Chinese people. As the party loses control over crop production, it will have fewer inducements at its command, such as wages, work points and ration coupons, with which to induce peasant women to agree to sterilization and abortion.

The Chinese people—beaten, inspired, traumatized, run-over, embraced and discarded by nearly four decades of zigzagging political movements—are often more able than outside observers to realize how wide the gap is between the ideal and the real in politics. They have learned the virtue, indeed the necessity, of being *yang feng yin wei*: compliant on the outside, defiant on the inside. They are like the peasant who in 1982 was asked by a cadre why he had not yet spread fertilizer on the orchard he had contracted to take care of under the new responsibility system. "I'm waiting for the Twelfth Party Congress next month," he replied. "I've got to see if there's any policy change."

By calling for a more realistic look at the major threats and challenges to the economic reforms, I am not making yet another argument that China is inherently unstable and unpredictable, and thus that these reforms are doomed to fail as others have before them. Nor am I attempting to belittle what clearly is the promise of a new era of maturity and good sense in Chinese domestic policies. The recent changes have been dramatic and refreshing. All too often, however, the drama of current Chinese politics beguiles some Chinese and China-watchers into forgetting or excusing away the past.

For example, it is quite remarkable and significant that last year the *People's Daily* questioned the universal validity of Marxism and its relevance to modern China. Yet one must not overlook what the Chinese leadership was saying about Marx on the centenary of his death only three years ago, when the reform movement was already well under way. In a national address titled "The Radiance of the Great Truth of Marxism Lights Our Way," General Secretary Hu said that even though "Marx and Engels have passed away . . . Marxism has developed with increasing vigor," and that "the history of Marxism is one of tri-

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umph over . . . antagonistic ideological trends."

Even Mao from time to time had to remind his colleagues of the abyss between propaganda and reality. In the 1950s, when he was denying in private what he was vehemently claiming in public—that an attack from the United States or the Soviet Union was imminent—he chided them, "We must not be misled by our propaganda." □

LETTER FROM ALABAMA

Celebrity Time Down South

DIANE McWHORTER

Birmingham

Richard Simmons, the fitness king, came to town last fall to lead what was billed as the world's largest exercise class. Although short of the Guinness record, it was certainly the largest exercise class ever held on the training ground for the Central Intelligence Agency's air attack on the Bay of Pigs. The Alabama Air National Guard, whose armory Simmons commandeered, had furnished the only American casualties of the invasion, the four C.I.A.-trained pilots who were shot down over Cuba. Fidel Castro kept the corpse of Pete Ray on ice as a monument to Alabama courage until the managing editor of *The Birmingham News* claimed it during the Carter Administration.

Where anti-Red airmen once maneuvered, pink-clad aerobites now flitted, and that wasn't the strangest spectacle of post-ideological politics in Alabama. In the old days, the demagoguery of racism and anticommunism united inimical factions of the state's (white) electorate, but now fame is smoothing the jagged angles of the newly biracial political process. The ism of today is show-bizm. Governor George Wallace, more celebrity than politician, consistently led the fall polls for this year's gubernatorial contest, although the same polls gave him a performance rating that bordered on ridicule. And Birminghamians who've never shared a table with a black, let alone a Communist, proudly claim native daughter Angela Davis.

"Neither the C.I.A. nor any other government agency possesses the slightest pertinent information of your son's disappearance," the mother of one Bay of Pigs flyboy was officially told. But today Alabamians serve proudly as "freedom fighters" in a brigade named after Jeane Kirkpatrick. The paramilitary patriot of the hour is the proprietor of the Frank Camper Mercenary School, situated since 1980 in the former mining town of Dolomite, just outside Birmingham. Camper, a Vietnam War veteran, trained the Sikh terrorists arrested in New Orleans last May in the assassination plot against Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Diane McWhorter is writing a book about her native Birmingham, circa 1963.

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By fall Alabama was in the grip of mercenary chic, and Camper sold his autobiography to a Japanese publisher. On the Merc School "battlefield," a student struck a familiar macho pose and said, "I love the smell of tear gas in the morning." The man doing the very fair imitation of Robert Duvall's napalm-sniffing colonel from *Apocalypse Now* was Robert Duvall. The actor was in Birmingham preparing for his next movie role, as a mercenary, at the same time that an unsuspecting CBS crew came through to tape a segment on the Merc School for *60 Minutes*. Harry Reasoner got captured by the prison-snatch team. "He thought they had gone nuts," Camper said, "but they just did it to screw with him."

"Just look at the proximity between *Brown vs. the Board of Education* and Elvis Presley's emergence," veteran rock critic Dave Marsh told *The Birmingham News*. "That's not entirely accidental." It took the celebrity status of a King to bring meaning to the state's most bizarre political story: the Justice Department investigations of voting fraud in Alabama's five poorest, blackest rural counties. Marsh's New Jersey-based newsletter, "Rock & Roll Confidential," produced a promotional documentary, *I'll Vote On*, to raise legal funds for the black defendants.

The story unfolded in silent-movie archetypes, like *Birth of a Nation* reconsidered. Dozens of F.B.I. agents trawl Alabama's Black Belt, the former domain of King Cotton; current big business, a dog track. They confront the descendants of slaves, many old and sickly, with their ballots from September 1984 elections and bus them to interrogation rooms hours away in Mobile. The voters eventually indicted for Federal voting fraud happen to be the major civil rights leaders in the area. One of them was second in line to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge during the Bloody Sunday opener of the Selma march. The march led to passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which enfranchised the defendants.

Here in Alabama, though, racial conflict was difficult to discern, particularly from the media coverage of the trials. True, all the defendants except one were black, but the Justice Department claimed that the complaints prompting its action had come from local blacks. And you wouldn't have to be up on your civics to deduce that the accused had not been practicing democracy at its most pious.

I went down to the Federal courthouse in Birmingham for the trial of the first of five defendants from Greene County to see if I could find a civil rights struggle. I discovered that the job of keeping racism legal has merely been reassigned from the courtrooms of Alabama to the northerly halls of the Justice Department.

Defendant James Colvin, the 30-year-old unpaid Mayor of Union, population 373, was charged with tampering with twelve absentee ballots in an election that was a showdown between the county's two major political forces. Like all the other defendants, Colvin and his candidates were members of the grass-roots organization of the underdog, the Civic League, whose agenda—raise property taxes, spend more on social welfare, annex black neighborhoods into the county seat—was your basic assault against the vested interests. The latter were represented by the Political Action Committee, the white power structure and its black girders.

"Segregationists are smart," said the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, the local power behind Martin Luther King Jr.'s demonstrations of 1963, who accompanied me to the closing arguments of the Colvin trial. PAC knew better than to run whites in overwhelmingly black Greene County; indeed, it repudiated what it termed "unauthorized white candidates." Its candidate was what blacks call a white folks' nigger (and Southern whites call a responsible Negro).

The election result was not challenged—Colvin's twelve tainted ballots had no effect on the outcome. So why did the defeated black PAC candidate take his seat behind the prosecutors during the trial? As did PAC member John Kennard, the county tax assessor, the most prominent of the "responsible Negroes" who "complained" to the F.B.I.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about the current Justice Department's collaboration with rural Alabama's white power structure is how obvious it was. As black activists like to say, they are as stupid as they must think we are. Every last defendant was a member of the Civic League. Not one was a member, or tool, of the power structure. To understand the odds against that happening by chance, you have to know a little about absentee voting in the Alabama Black Belt. The practices for which the Civic Leaguers were prosecuted are legendary in these counties. The whites pioneered them, in response to the wholesale registration of blacks under the Voting Rights Act. The chief technique involved manipulating the absentee vote, which sometimes makes up 20 percent of the ballots in local races. There is a joke about the Black Belt's Wilcox County—which in 1984 had 14,267 registered voters out of a voting-age population of 9,759—that the graveyards have paved avenues so the dead people can get out to vote without leaving any tracks. For years blacks filed futile complaints against the practice, as elections were stolen from them in the absentee count. No one seemed to care about fraud until the blacks started winning the white man's game without even registering tombstones. At least the disputed ballots in the Greene County case bore the names of legitimate voters, albeit not always with their knowledge.

The Justice Department's interest in rural Alabama began in 1982—coincidentally or not, after all five of the affected counties had elected black-majority local governments. (No Black Belt counties with white-majority governments were investigated.) The following year the western Black Belt sent

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its first all-black delegation to the State Legislature. And the politically appointed civil rights chief William Bradford Reynolds overruled Justice careerists who condemned a white county commission's transfer of a polling place to the Selma courthouse where Sheriff Jim Clark once greeted would-be black voters with a cattle prod.

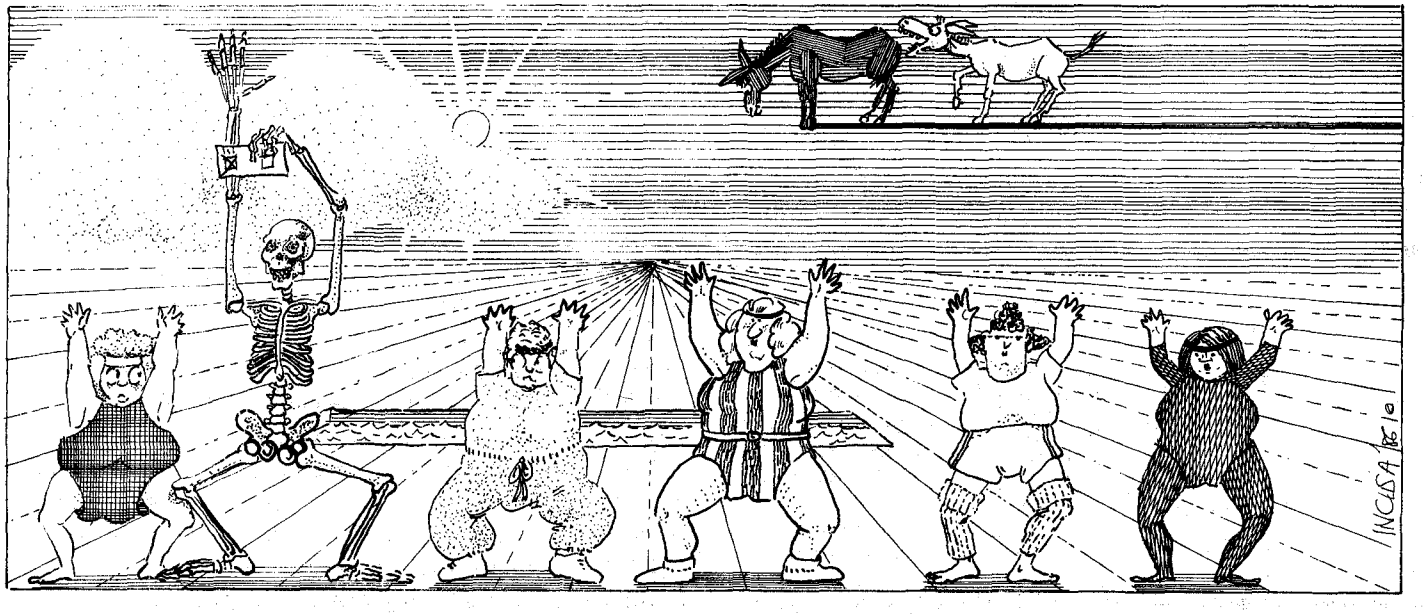
The Reagan Administration has denied that the investigations were politically motivated. Nevertheless, the career lawyers in the civil rights division's voting section were not consulted about the investigations or the trial and, in fact, were surprised that the Federal government would get involved in county races. John Russell of the Justice Department's office of public affairs did admit that the campaign was "isolated" in the Black Belt of Alabama and Georgia and targeted only "civil rights leaders and religious leaders." But the probe was brought on purely by "some arrogance on the part of blacks," said Russell, who insisted that he was not a racist. When defense lawyers from the Montgomery-based Southern Poverty Law Center surveyed the prosecution's evidence and found some arrogant whites guilty of identical improprieties, they filed a civil suit against Edwin Meese 3d and his department, alleging selective prosecution. A Federal judge threw the case out.

The defendants, seconded by national civil rights activists and the Senate Judiciary Committee's Howard Metzenbaum, charged that the use of F.B.I. agents to disrupt local Democratic Party organizations and make blacks afraid to vote was part of a Reagan strategy to insure the re-election next year of Alabama's first Republican senator since Reconstruction, Jeremiah Denton, the pride of the very right. While claiming lack of interest in the investigations, Denton has been pushing for a Federal judgeship for Jefferson Beauregard Sessions 3d, the U.S. Attorney for southern Alabama, who prosecuted the first of the voting fraud cases. At that trial the judge dismissed a third of the government's indictments, and the jury deliberated only two hours before acquitting the civil rights leaders of all charges [see Allen Tullos, "Voting Rights Activists Acquitted," *The Nation*, August 3/10, 1985].

The remaining cases were pursued by government lawyers with such fecklessness that to attribute them to anything other than bad faith would be to malign the competence of the country's law schools. Government lawyers were told by Alabama judges that many of the alleged voting crimes were not only not illegal, they were federally protected. With stereotype-shattering regularity, jury after mostly Southern white jury either acquitted the defendants or, as in the Colvin case, hung in a mistrial.

In late October, the government finally gained its first victory. Spiver Gordon, head of Greene County's Southern Christian Leadership Conference and a member of that organization's national board, was convicted on four counts (involving two absentee ballots, registered to his wife's uncles) out of the original thirty-seven, sixteen of which the government dropped during the trial. Several members of the all-white jury, which had deliberated for more than twenty-three hours over five days, said afterward that they hoped the convictions—"compromises" they called them—would be overturned on appeal.

During a local noncampaign appearance last summer, not long after Ronald Reagan raised half a million dollars for him at a lunch in Alabama, Senator Denton broke down crying at the memory, he said, of those black corporals in Vietnam, so loyal and patriotic even as their race took to the streets back home. Maybe he was trying to hijack the constituency of the Democratic golden boy, touted all fall as his opponent for 1986. Don Siegelman, the youthful two-time Alabama Secretary of State, who has managed to turn his political sump of an office into a springboard, furnished the cornerstone of the voting fraud defense with this ex officio statement: "Alabama election laws are outdated, conflicting, confusing and can serve as traps for uninformed citizens." The Georgetown University and Oxford-educated Siegelman directed the state's McGovern campaign and worked as an aide to Representative Allard Lowenstein—and his wife uses her own name. The Moral Majority, which has forgiven Denton his Catholicism, was



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rumored to be gloating over a tape of Siegelman saying he supports abortion rights and the Equal Rights Amendment. In January, Siegelman, hard put to compete with Denton's war chest anyway, switched to a surer race, for Attorney General.

Denton is not without serious opposition, and it looks as if the Justice Department went to all that trouble for nothing. But, then, maybe Denton should have courted the Black Belt all along. Stranger bedfellows has 'Bama known.

When George Wallace was elected to an unprecedented fourth term, in 1982, it was widely observed that the Black Belt's leaders had delivered the crucial votes in his thin primary victory over a proven progressive (and current gubernatorial contender), George McMillan. One of Wallace's most effective supporters was and is the Civic League's highest-ranking politician, William McKinley Branch, the first black probate judge elected in the South since Reconstruction and a candidate for Congress in 1986. But the bosses may be losing the rank and file. When a couple of *Birmingham News* reporters went to the Black Belt to check out whether the F.B.I.'s offensive had scared blacks away from the polls, one man told them he certainly wouldn't cast another ballot for Wallace. "He did some dirty things," he explained. "He stood in that schoolhouse door to keep blacks out." But that was more than twenty years ago, a reporter pointed out. "I know," the man said, "but I ain't forgetting."

Back in star-struck Birmingham, October's historic City Council elections, which produced the first black majority in the city's history, were upstaged by a sideshow at the State Fair. Tim Rivers' Original High-Diving Aqua Mules, which plunged off a thirty-foot platform into six feet of water, aroused more animal-loving picketers than many candidates had canvassers. When Councilman John Katapodis, a Harvard Ph.D., proposed an investigation into the charges of cruelty made by the Humane Society, a fellow Councilman said, If you're so concerned, get on up on the platform instead of the mules. Nah, chimed in a colleague, that would still be cruelty to dumb animals.

Race hate finally did make news this fall when a bona fide Alabama celebrity, the man convicted in the church bombing of 1963 that killed four black girls, died with his Southern honor intact. He never squealed on the other Klansmen who helped him.

The day before Robert E. Chambliss died, I was in Montgomery having the kind of lunch that Richard Simmons screamed at us about—fried chicken and dead vegetables—with another privileged white child of Alabama, John A. Yung 4th. In 1977, fourteen years after the bombing, Yung was one of Dynamite Bob's key prosecutors when Bill Baxley, then Attorney General and now another leading gubernatorial contender, reopened the case. Chambliss's conviction was my peak experience as an Alabama citizen. As Yung and I discussed him over lunch, I was struck by the irony of participating in Robert Chambliss's immortality. His fame would endure long after the world and even the state had forgotten that Cathy Yvonne Stone, a 32-year-old Alabamian featured in *People*, was the long-lost illegitimate daughter of Hank ("Your Cheatin' Heart") Williams. □

Catholicism

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

change that transformed the world into what it is today. Alarmed at the effect those developments could have on the church, he led a vigorous and successful campaign against "modernism." One of the many clergymen who came under suspicion of being infected with this antispiritual virus and had to defend himself was a young priest named Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, who later became Pope John XXIII.

As the Archbishop of Krakow, Karol Cardinal Wojtyla attended Vatican II, but like the other Eastern European bishops, he did not take an active part in its work. The Eastern Europeans did not see how the reforms of the council were pertinent to their problems, their view of the world and their conception of Christianity. To them, Vatican II weakened the church's spiritual authority by compromising with temporal forces and conditions. Most important, it gave them no support in their continuing struggle with anti-religious governments, a struggle that has come to dominate the thinking of the hierarchy in that part of the world.

The militant fundamentalism of the Eastern European churches, particularly in Poland, is essentially at one with that of Catholic archconservatives elsewhere in the world. Twenty years ago, at Vatican II, such conservatives were considered spent forces, out of step with the *Zeitgeist*. They were opposed by a strong alliance of liberal Western church leaders and thinkers which had developed since the war and which was flourishing with the full support of John XXIII. The core of that alliance consisted of the most progressive German theologians, supported by their French and Dutch colleagues. Western liberals coalesced around them. The alliance also had the passive but important support of the Third World hierarchy, which was recognized as representing the church of the future. John XXIII died while the council was still in progress and was succeeded by Paul VI, who had liberal credentials and wished to continue the work of reform. But in the Curia, where he had long served, he was recognized as being indecisive. The conservatives, horrified at the direction in which the council was going, saw their chance and put pressure on the new Pope to blunt its effect. They made deletions and additions to its documents that were fundamentally opposed to Vatican II's main thrust and spirit. The progressives were forced to compromise, but they were convinced that time was on their side and that the reforms the council had begun were well rooted.

The progressive bishops who gathered at the recent synod still felt that way about Vatican II, but they were no longer

T.M. Pasca, who lives in Rome, also writes for the New Statesman.

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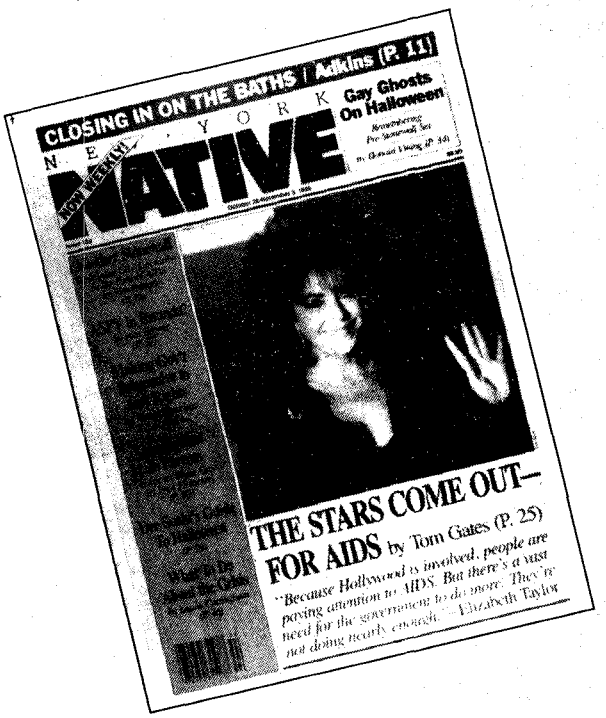
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so sanguine about the fading away of reactionary elements in the church.

The American episcopate, represented at the synod by its president, Bishop James Malone of Youngstown, Ohio, is one of the most progressive. It is also the richest and, with one of every four Americans a Catholic, an important group politically. The Pope is depending on leading traditionalist Cardinals John O'Connor of New York, John Krol of Philadelphia and Bernard Law of Boston to rally the conservatives among the American clergy and the laity.

The strength of the liberals in the American church helps explain why the West German church, headed by Joseph Cardinal Hoeffner of Cologne, has become so important at the Vatican. It is the second-richest national church, and its bishops are conservative. Cardinal Hoeffner was instrumental in getting the American bishops' letter on nuclear war toned down. He considered it inconsistent with U.S. military policy in Europe. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, who heads the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the Vatican, has set the tone for the Pope's restoration campaign.

The challenge to Rome from progressives in the overdeveloped world may be handled by conservatives from that same world. However, the challenge to central authority and traditional thinking that the Pope is now experiencing from the Third World churches is far more complex. The biggest change since Vatican II is that today well over half the world's estimated 825 million Catholics are in the underdeveloped countries. Of the 165 bishops attending the synod as voting delegates, 103 were from Third World countries.

At a press conference held before the start of the synod, Godfried Cardinal Danneels of Belgium took note of the present heterogeneous state of Catholicism. It contains three kinds of churches, he said, each with its own needs and problems. They are the church of the Western industrialized nations, of the Third World and of Eastern Europe. After the synod had concluded, a reporter from the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* asked the Cardinal which of those churches had had the greatest impact on the Vatican during the synod. "The countries of Eastern Europe had a new weight and importance," he replied. "In the East the love of the church is much stronger. There the church is much more accepted."

Indeed, while the Eastern European bishops did not seem to have said anything particularly new or startling, Cardinal Danneels's comment revealed the direction in which John Paul II is trying to take Catholicism. The Eastern European church is the least compromised by secular influences; it is militant, spiritual and popular. Like John Paul II himself, it is also respected in the West because of its opposition to Communist governments. And it listens respectfully to Rome. It closely resembles the Eurocentric model of Catholicism before 1914. For the Pope and those who think as he does, Eastern Europe is where the old-time religion has been preserved—ironically, thanks to Communism. It is the counterweight to both the "neomodernism" of American liberal Catholics, who look too much like Protestants, and the culturally distant and independent-minded churches of the Third World.

That model has another significance: it stands for a vision of a Christian Europe, united spiritually if not politically. The Pope understands that vision well. It is still vivid for Europeans who are traditionalist though not necessarily politically conservative. As many Western Europeans note, one has to go to Eastern Europe to appreciate fully not only what the people there have lost by being cut off from the West but also what Western Europe has lost by being separated from the East. More Western Europeans are nostalgic for the traditions, values and memories still alive in the East than is generally realized. This cultural memory, based on a common Christian heritage, serves as a counterbalance against the cultural, economic and political weight of America, which looks more foreign the more familiar it becomes. In a way, traditionalist Europeans, who think of the Continent as essentially Christian, are reclaiming their Europeanness. When the Pope calls for a return to a Eurocentric Catholicism, he is saying the same thing.

The Pope had two major purposes in calling the synod. One was to lend authority and guidance to the rollback of Vatican II. That was done for him by the most conservative bishops, such as Cardinal Ratzinger. The changes conservatives had presciently made in the documents drafted by Vatican II were used to tone down or deny the meaning and spirit of the texts as a whole. In statements from key bishops and in the *Relatio Finalis*, the synod's summary document, the primacy of the Pope and the Curia were stressed and the collegiality of bishops and the decision-making authority of national episcopates was downplayed.

The other purpose of the synod was to afford the Pope an opportunity to judge for himself how much support there is for his campaign of restoration—in effect, his Counter-reformation.

On each of the eleven working days of the synod the Pope, looking thoughtful, arrived at the modernistic Nervi Hall ensconced in the thronelike seat of his black Mercedes. His opening address was brief and general, telling everyone to speak freely. From then on he said nothing, just listened.

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Each bishop had eight minutes. Written interventions could also be submitted. English was the most commonly spoken language, followed by Italian, Spanish, French and German. Only a few bishops can now manage Latin, the ancient language of the church; the Eastern Europeans spoke it fluently.

The African bishops called for greater "inculturation," in the spirit of Vatican II. That term has many implications, one of which involves clerical celibacy. In Africa, celibacy by persons in authority is almost unheard of. Reportedly, an African bishop pointed to another sitting beside him and said: "He is the son of a chief who had forty wives. And what does he have? Nothing. No one." The Vatican is aware that many African priests, and also some bishops, are married or live with women and have children, but it prefers to look the other way because it feels powerless in the situation. Many African churches are calling for an African synod at which to confront the Pope and the Curia with their problems. The Vatican wants to avoid an open clash.

All things considered, John Paul II is behaving with a good deal of caution in a difficult and confusing period. He is in no way a white man's Pope, and he is trying to understand the Third World churches on their own terms. He has to. But they are in a better position than Rome to understand the continuity of Rome's thinking and attitudes in regard to their extremely diverse problems, needs, histories and cultures.

Differences like these bubbled up at the synod but were kept under control by a mood of tolerance based on loyalty to the church, a strong tradition of religious unity and adherence to the institution of the papacy. Those are among the great strengths of Catholicism. Even so, one issue especially pushed at the limits of this tolerance: liberation theology.

At a meeting of the College of Cardinals preceding the synod, fifteen Latin American prelates signed a letter to the Pope supporting his efforts to stop the spread of liberation theology. At first the Vatican denied the existence of the letter, but a week later the text was published in the Spanish edition of its official newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*.

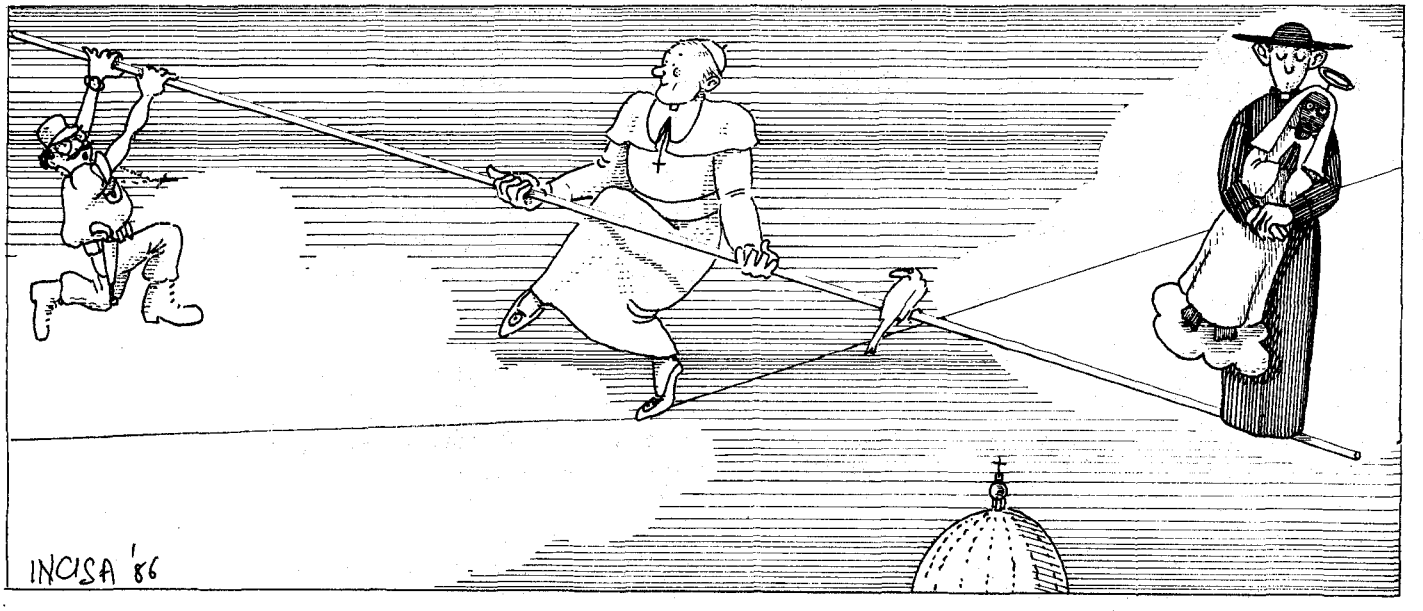
On the floor at Nervi Hall the bitter contention between the supporters and opponents of liberation theology was barely concealed behind formal theological language. Finally, Bishop José Ivo Lorscheiter, president of the Brazilian Conference of Bishops, brought the issue out into the open with a written intervention addressed to the Pope. It ranks as one of the most challenging statements made publicly to the Vatican by a high-ranking defender of liberation theology.

Bishop Lorscheiter said that liberation theology "is not the product of a few isolated and more audacious theologians, but the fruit of the totality of the Latin American church's life." Challenging the "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation,'" issued by Cardinal Ratzinger's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1984, he said:

> Against false interpretations it must be clarified that Liberation Theology is not a theology of violence or one that pushes towards violence. It is not a theology that assumes or justifies Marxist ideology. . . . Nor does it break with Catholic theological tradition. . . . Liberation Theology is indispensable to the Church's activity and to the social commitment of Christians, even if it carries with it risks, such as those recently indicated by the "Instruction" of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, risks that need to be faced seriously and responsibly.

The bishop said he made this strong statement because of the imminent release of another Vatican instruction on liberation theology, which may be signed by the Pope.

After the synod, what will be the next step in John Paul II's restoration? "The real trouble that the church faces," the assistant to one of the European bishops told me, "is on the level below the hierarchy: the rebellion of the clergy and the laity." That upheaval will be the subject of the Synod on the Laity which is now in preparation and scheduled to take place in 1987. "That," said the priest, "is where the real fireworks will take place." □



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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Bad Manners & Bad Faith

MARIA MARGARONIS AND ELIZABETH POCHODA

Political protests are by nature ephemeral, but they can sometimes expose the mechanisms of power and set the mechanisms of resistance into motion. If there is a reason to recount what Salman Rushdie called the matter of "the politician whose name begins with Sh" at the 48th International PEN Congress, it is that the episode cut straight to the heart of the congress's baffling theme, "The Writer's Imagination and the Imagination of the State." For in the mist of that lofty topic lies a painfully concrete question: What is a writer's—or anyone's—proper relation to power, to its seductions, to the accommodations it demands, to the responsibilities it carries? At the risk of boring those who would rather read about the bons mots of the famous, not to mention the risk of further nourishing Norman Mailer's celebrated narcissism, we offer, in the spirit of a parable, an account of *l'affaire* Sh and all that came after.

This is a story of bad manners and bad faith. The former, still in need of definition, are hardly unexpected at a gathering as heated as last week's congress. As to the latter, it would seem to be something writers live to resist, and yet, as we shall see, they do not always do so. The story's beginning lies at some undisclosed date in the past year when John Kenneth Galbraith and Norman Mailer agreed to invite Secretary of State George Shultz to address the opening session of the PEN congress at the New York Public Library. This Mailer did in his capacity as American PEN's president, without consulting its executive board. The general membership, which receives regular mailings from PEN, was not informed of the invitation, or of other matters which were to prove equally controversial. Most foreign participants learned that they would be addressed by the Secretary of State only upon arriving in New York for the meetings. There was, to put it mildly, dissatisfaction in the air.

The main objections to Shultz's presence as a keynote speaker were these: First, he is a representative and architect of abhorrent policies, with which many of the guests have had direct experience. Second, many PEN members felt deep unease that their organization had ceded its place of honor to any representative of the state. Mailer's decision seemed to commit them willy-nilly to an acceptance of, even deference to, the state's authority. For as Günter Grass later pointed out when Gay Talese charged him with a foolish reluctance to know the enemy, Shultz's appearance offered no such opportunity, since the form of the ceremony allowed neither questions nor answers. Rushdie completed this argument at another point when he observed that to hear a politician is not to know him—politicians are revealed not through their words but by their deeds.

Several writers and editors expressed their opposition in the mildest possible way: they signed a hastily composed letter to Shultz (see box), which was to be presented and read aloud before or after his speech. But despite the efforts of three past presidents of American PEN, Richard Gilman, Richard Howard and Galway Kinnell, who sent the letter to Mailer while he was closeted with Shultz, the statement was not read aloud. In his opening remarks, Mailer referred prettily to a "*division d'opinion*" among those present and went on to placate the disgruntled by assuring them that the Secretary of State's enlightened views on the McCarran-Walter Act would surprise them (as if that was the only issue at hand). The speeches rolled on, delivered through a loud and echoing public address system and punctuated by demands from the floor that the letter be read. The once unruly Mailer stuck like a schoolboy to formal procedure, studiously ignoring protests from his constituents.

Mailer's overbearing and authoritarian manner (now more Oxonian than in the days of his Southern sheriff impersonations) was consistent with the general tenor of the proceedings, both inside and outside the library. For all but a privileged few, admission to the congress through the library's 42nd Street entrance had been an exercise in humiliation. Instead of being welcomed by their hosts at PEN, guests were met by bullying guards who blocked the doors and admitted a trickle of journalists and whichever "guests of honor" could push their way to the front. The frail, the patient and the miscellaneous jostled one another precariously on the steep library steps. As the light faded and the speeches began, several guests—both distinguished and not, to use PEN's designations—were still out in the cold. In the words of one battered supplicant, "This is what happens when you invite the state."

In the hushed interior of the reading room, the guards' lack of politesse gave way to the rigors of politeness. Like children in their scratchy Sunday best, the writers were out of place in their own home, masking their customary fractiousness to put on a show for an important visitor. From his elevated position on the podium, Mailer managed to corrupt the notion of bad manners and present himself as the embodiment of decorum. Grace Paley stood up in an interval between speeches and called out:"Norman, we would like to have our letter read. Norman, please read the letter." Other voices joined hers. But Mailer acknowledged no one save his new peers on the platform, and then apologized to Shultz for the "silly bad manners" of the "puritanical leftists" in the audience.

Let us pause for a moment to consider these bad manners, if that is what they were. In a decorous and austere setting like this one, bad manners take the kind of courage Mailer used to have—the courage to misbehave in public rather than manipulate in private. It doesn't take courage to shut out your opposition from a podium with the aid of a microphone. What takes courage is to speak truth to power when no one will listen, to shout if necessary, even at the risk of seeming lunatic and rude. It can be, as they say, a radicalizing experience, but it's not a lot of fun. In complimenting Paley on her efforts, someone later remarked that she must be inured by now to the embarrassment of making scenes. "No," she replied, "it's terrible. It feels terrible every time." By contrast, hiding behind politeness is a luxury of power. It was Mailer who betrayed a fat and fateful rudeness by preferring to please the august while turning his back on those he had offended.

Mailer has since shown a little ambiv-

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alence about his behavior that evening, but at the press conference immediately following, his adrenaline was still running high. He said he was "baffled by the disturbance," and that he didn't hear the protests from the floor. But if he didn't hear the protests, why did he also say he was sorry he didn't realize it was Grace Paley who was asking to be heard? (Future PEN congresses will be left to debate the meaty question of why one should only regret ignoring the famous.) He even managed a sentimental reminiscence about holding hands with Grace at the march on Washington in 1968 (cf. *Armies of the Night*, Mailer's finer hour). As a parting shot from the old crowd-pleaser, misogynist phase, Mailer remarked that he might not have read the letter anyway because he "didn't invite Secretary Shultz here in order to be insulted, to be, uh, pussywhipped." Now there's something he'd never have said in front of the secretary. Which brings us to the question of bad faith.

Once he had handcuffed himself to Shultz, Mailer was obliged to equivocate, for he had either to silence the writers to whom he was responsible or betray the state occasion he had arranged. He was thus bound to his bad faith, whose first manifestation was a panicky and predictable effort to hijack the idea of free speech. The protest he characterized as an attack on open debate was mild to the point of finkiness; the letter did not call for a boycott of Shultz's talk (it was too late for that in any case) or ask that the invitation be rescinded (it was also too late for that). The signatories simply demanded a hearing for their view that the Secretary of State should not wave his scepter over the opening rites of the PEN conference. So it was sly and manipulative of Mailer to appropriate the banner of free speech for the purpose of saving face. In this he revealed an uncanny resemblance to Shultz, whose descant on freedom ended as a thirty-second jingle for the Reagan Administration.

It is unsettling to think that Mailer was willing to silence writers so that they could bask in the reflected power of the state. But then that is the nature of constructive engagement, which always involves bad faith. Two more examples: While Mailer offered up the Secretary's presence to the congress as an honor pure and simple, he later said that he was delighted at Shultz's acceptance because it "would give our organization credibility with the media." And backed into a corner later that week, he stuck in his thumb and pulled out this plum: Shultz's "astonishingly liberal" speech, he said, "gave us some interesting sentiments that PEN can use for the next ten or twenty years."

That may not be as absurd as it sounds, for Shultz's appointment as the conference's figurehead was not the only symptom of enchantment with the state—particularly the American state. The atmosphere of celebrity, the chandeliers, the cameras, the microphones, the tape recorders lapping up every word—what was all this if not a flirtation with pomp and circumstance, White House–style? Perhaps that is why you had to be famous to be heard; why the panels and readings were overloaded with white male stars; why market value determined literary value and pushed novelists forward at poets' expense; and why the political and cultural discussions were dominated by American concerns. Even the appointed theme seemed to encourage sanctimony and self-congratulation: invoking the idea of the

Secretary of State George Shultz

Dear Sir,

As you are probably aware, a number of writers and editors here feel that it is inappropriate for you to open the 48th International PEN Congress. The Administration you represent has done nothing to further freedom of expression, either at home or abroad. As E.L. Doctorow has pointed out in *The New York Times* and in *The Nation*, your Administration supports governments that silence, imprison, even torture their citizens for their beliefs. Under your leadership, the State Department has, in the past, excluded many writers from the United States using the McCarran-Walter Act.

PEN has traditionally protected the writer's independence from the state. For this reason, it is particularly distressing that a congress whose theme is "The Writer's Imagination and the Imagination of the State" should begin by compromising that independence.

Susan Sontag
(vice president, PEN)
Nadine Gordimer
(vice president, International PEN)
Galway Kinnell
(past president, PEN)
Richard Howard
(past president, PEN)
Richard Gilman
(past president, PEN)
Anne Bernays
(PEN New England)
Justin Kaplan
(PEN New England)
Grace Paley
Russell Banks
E.L. Doctorow
C.K. Williams
Lynne Sharon Schwartz
Eric Bentley
Ted Solotaroff
Grace Shulman
Pete Hamill
Amy Clampitt
Richard Sennett
Elizabeth Hardwick
Jean Strouse
William Matthews
John Irving
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Victor Navasky
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Mary Gordon
Mary Morris
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Stanley Kauffmann
Anthony Heilbut
Harvey Shapiro
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National Writers' Union
Maureen Quilligan
André Schiffrin
Luisa Valenzuela
Philip Pochoda
Margo Jefferson
Louise Meriwether
Kenneth Koch
Charles Simic
Michael Malone
Maria Margaronis
Elizabeth Swados
Andrew Kopkind
Margo Howard
Erika Munk
Michael Stephens
D.D.Guttenplan

These signatures were collected in a period of twenty-four hours before the congress began. The names of those who signed the letter on the library steps and afterward are far too numerous to include here.

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state gives writers a dark background against which to shine.

Not everyone was insensitive to the contradictions, and it took a certain courage for those uncomfortable with the melodrama of the artist's higher calling to press on anyway. Throughout the conference a number of writers addressed the twin dangers of splendid isolation and cozying up to power. Resisting the seductions of disengagement, George Konrád said, "I have not become alienated from the state—we were never one in body and soul," and Grass challenged the literary imagination to come up with a deeper response than "hellish laughter." Nadine Gordimer began by asking, How do the writer and the state get on? and answered with a modest reminder:

> Where the state says it welcomes and encourages assaults by the imagination on the state's projection, it invites the poet to dine at the state house and at the same time shores up, if not the law, then something invoked as the traditional morality of the nation.

Hans Magnus Enzensberger spoke of the dangerous effect of empire on the imagination:

> If we identify too much with the glory and the power of our own time, the price we pay is high. It is particularly high if we happen to be writers and if our time happens to be imperial.

In the end, though, all the eloquence of the world's most famous writers could not have broken the spell of hierarchical formality that bound the congress. For that, the rules had to be violated. And on the penultimate day of a week that had begun with a spark of trouble, good bad manners finally drove out bad good ones. Outraged by the fact that only about seventeen of the 120 panelists were female, a group of women occupied the main conference room and, with participatory enthusiasm and a lot of noise, drafted a statement challenging the congress's clubbiness and sexism. Once bitten, twice shy. A PEN spokeswoman readily agreed to give the women twenty minutes at the closing session to express their grievance and demand an explanation.

When power is challenged, it often finds unexpected ways of reasserting itself—in this case, the subtle savageries of charm, naughtiness and going by the book. Mailer tried out each of these on the following day and then, like a dowager who's afraid she's given a crummy party, turned sour and imperious. Bad

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faith made a new appearance as he tried to turn the issue of sexism into a question of excellence: the rallying cry on the platform was "Literature is not an equal opportunity employer," as if anyone had argued for mediocrity. Perhaps because Mailer's foolishness was apparent even to him (or because this time he had no back-up group from the State Department), he began to insult, to sneer, to invite ridicule—to become, in short, a caricature of his old self. But all was not psychodrama, and as Mailer lost control the meeting briefly broke up into a satisfying plurality of voices. Several speakers from the floor salvaged the spirit of protest and spoke eloquently on behalf of the kind of imagination that is not imperial, magisterial or plain bloody-minded. Here was a tiny glimpse of what the conference might have been like if it had, from the start, imagined itself democratic.

This story is not a simple allegory of the pure and the impure; instead of a moral, it has a meaning. At the 48th International PEN Congress, writers heard the siren call of the American state and (mostly) resisted its seduction. When the trade winds blew from Reagan's Washington, they were answered by gusts of opposition. Perhaps, in the future, it will be that much harder for the Administration to invade new tracts of the moral terrain. And perhaps some writers, at least, will be encouraged to accept Salman Rushdie's definition of alienation: a sense of identity different from the state's that makes possible new collective groupings—oppositional communities of the imagination. □

A Hole in History

JOHN STEVENSON

BY THE BOMB'S EARLY LIGHT: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age. *By Paul Boyer. Pantheon Books. 440 pp. $22.50.*

World War II's immediate aftermath is virtually terra incognita in American consciousness. Our histories pass quickly over the years 1945-50, and move abruptly from the hot war to the cold. The Janus face of postwar expectations, as well as the emergence of the grim countenance of cold war America, remain obscure. Perhaps nothing better illuminates this missing link of history than the atomic bomb, which ended the hot war and came to dominate the cold. Certainly it seems to be so on the evidence presented here, in lively and accessible form, by Paul Boyer.

When *Time* named Truman its 1945 Man of the Year, its cover was dominated not by the President but by the Bomb. In the same year *Life* pictured a "36-hour war," with nuclear missiles from an unnamed enemy devastating thirteen major U.S. cities. Early in 1946 *Ladies' Home Journal* told readers that preventing atomic war was "the thought you should wake up to, go to sleep with and carry with you all day." Among the best sellers of this period were *One World or None*, an anthology put out by the Federation of American (formerly Atomic) Scientists, and Norman Cousins's *Modern Man is Obsolete*; both books advocated world government as an answer to the atomic threat. In June 1947, though, a New Jersey high school principal prevented the valedictorian from giving a speech on the international control of atomic energy because he found the topic too controversial, and within a couple of years the wartime head of national scientific research, Vannevar Bush, was "assess[ing] the bomb more objectively," pooh-poohing atomic fears. David Lilienthal (former head of the Tennessee Valley Authority and now chair of the Atomic Energy Commission) had begun encouraging positive thinking about "this new critter, the Atom," while General Electric (a major contractor for nuclear power development) distributed the comic *Dagwood Splits the Atom* and the Federal government sponsored a manual advising citizens on *How to Survive an Atomic Bomb*.

These are the sorts of examples Boyer uses to good effect. He also includes some remarkable photographs (my favorite shows one Vice Admiral Blandy and his wife celebrating the 1946 atomic tests at Bikini by cutting a large cake shaped to represent a nuclear explosion). But, lest the impression be given that this is a

John Stevenson is a writer and critic who lives in Chicago.

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book version of *Atomic Café*, there's much more here than striking illustrations. This is a multifaceted history, not exactly of "American thought and culture at the dawn of the atomic age" (the subtitle is both too broad and too narrow), but of U.S. cultural reaction to the bomb in the last five years of the 1940s.

The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki provoked a wave of heated discussion and emotion—an intense combination of fear and the desire to do something. The concern did not center on the first use of the bomb against Japanese cities but on the advent of a new era: "the Atomic Age," as it was immediately dubbed. This consciousness included, first of all, a pervasive sense of vulnerability. Almost immediately there were predictions of long-range nuclear missiles, an international atomic arms race and full-scale extinction. On the other hand, visions of atomic gadgetry, which Boyer characterizes as calculated anodynes to terror, depicted a life of abundance and ease. And finally, there were numerous activities devoted to averting atomic disaster—a world government movement, intense activity among scientists and various utopian proposals.

Boyer makes some interesting observations about these initial reactions to the bomb. On the one hand he notes that the fears and hopes he describes are directly related to avoiding discussion of Hiroshima: keeping our eyes on the future was a way of averting them from the past. (Within a month or two of the Hiroshima bombing Edward Teller—yes, the notorious "father of the H-bomb"/ Star Wars advocate was once an anti-nuker—talked with a minister who insisted that America would never use the bomb; Teller had to remind him that America had already used it twice.) On the other hand he points out that this is all strikingly familiar:

> The visions of atomic devastation, the earnest efforts to rouse people to resist such a fate, the voices seeking to soothe or deflect these fears, the insistence that security lay in greater technical expertise and in more and bigger weaponry. . . . All the major elements of our contemporary engagement with nuclear reality took shape literally within days of Hiroshima.

But that was in the beginning. Boyer demarcates two major stages within his chosen five-year period: there was a cultural shift from the fear, activism and urgency of 1945-46 to the "dulled acquiescence" of 1947-50. The latter period was characterized by official campaigns to soothe fears about the bomb, an emphasis on the peaceful uses of atomic energy (*The Sunny Side of the Atom,* as CBS titled a pseudodocumentary narrated by Agnes Moorhead), as well as civil defense mobilization, all of which culminated in an "embracing of the bomb" by the decade's end: "Americans now seemed not only ready to accept the bomb, but to support any measures necessary to maintain atomic supremacy."

The shift is nowhere seen more clearly than in the case of the scientists who had been galvanized by the bomb's first use. Led by some of the scientists who had worked on the Manhattan Project, a real movement had sprung up. One of its central tenets was that since there was no defense against atomic warfare and other nations would soon have the bomb, international control was a necessity. But by 1950 the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (the movement's most permanent creation) was already devoting an issue to the sympathetic examination of civil defense. Soon the movement's main organization, the Federation of American Scientists, would take "no official position on the question of the use of the atomic bomb in Korea, and [accept] the hydrogen-bomb decision as 'inevitable under the circumstances.'" The bomb had been embraced.

One of the book's best sections examines "the crisis of morals and values" occasioned by the bomb. Although an overwhelming majority of people appeared to approve of its use on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there were isolated voices of protest—mostly Christian in origin—which strongly condemned the bombings on moral grounds. (On the issue of nuclear war in general, however, the response of the churches was decidedly more divided and ambivalent.) Among blacks, as among others, there was widespread suspicion that racism had been involved in the use of this weapon against the Japanese. Pacifists not only condemned the bombings but generally saw in the weapon a final proof of the immorality of modern war. The writings of several individuals come in for special mention here. A.J. Muste declared that "if Dachau was a crime, Hiroshima is a crime." Lewis Mumford characterized the bomb as an instrument of genocide and government leaders as clinically

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mad. Dwight Macdonald reflected on the ethical numbness inherent in the modern state. And of course there was John Hersey's *Hiroshima*. Hersey's book is an interesting case. Although Boyer defends it against criticism of its uninflected style and deliberate lack of outrage, he does, in the end, point out that "its immediate effect seems curiously ephemeral and elusive," and that "indeed, for many, the very act of reading [it] seems to have provided release from stressful and complex emotions." Nevertheless he does not explore the contradiction between the heightened consciousness that he says Hersey's book created and its soporific effect.

On the whole, though, as Boyer emphasizes, a similar sort of turning away from the historical events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was one of the most prominent characteristics of America's response to the bomb: Hiroshima became, as Mary McCarthy put it, "a kind of hole in human history."

The surprising array of cultural materials in *By the Bomb's Early Light* should earn it a considerable following. If the book has a flaw it lies in its mania to trace everything to the bomb. In fact, almost all the themes, tendencies and contradictions associated with the reaction to the bomb were making themselves felt before the explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Hollywood's *films noirs* articulated a sense of menace and dread which antedated the atomic explosions. Similarly, visions of postwar gadget-ridden abundance, as well as liberal "one-worldism" and other social reform tendencies, were already common during the war. Whereas Boyer speaks of social and political forces "unleashed by the atomic genii," it seems more plausible that the bomb became the icon to which these forces and attitudes attached themselves.

There is, moreover, a lack of political analysis here. What were the postwar social and political forces set in motion? We need to bring our knowledge of these forces to bear if we are to understand the various responses Boyer describes. He does see the shift in attitudes toward the bomb during the 1947-50 period as closely related to the cold war, but even here he is liable to attribute something like the downfall of Robert Oppenheimer in 1954 to an antiscientific animus, seen as a legacy of the bomb. But what was going on in the United States at the war's end? What

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social and cultural forces came into play, only to succumb so quickly to cold war reaction, and why? A discussion of such questions would provide the context that would make Boyer's fascinating data even more significant. Boyer's claims are modest, and he becomingly expresses at the beginning his "hope that what I have written will be viewed not as the last word, but as a point of departure for further work." And it does offer just such a point.

Whatever its shortcomings, Boyer's book is extremely valuable. In addition to breaking new historical ground, Boyer is alive to the contemporary lessons his data suggest. He sees the history of our reaction to the bomb as one of "continuing cycles of activism and apathy," with another period of heightened atomic concern from the mid-1950s to early 1960s, followed by "the big sleep" of 1963-80. The activism of recent years brings with it a "powerful sense of *déjà vu*. . . . Except for a post-holocaust 'Nuclear Winter,' every theme and image by which we express our nuclear fear today has its counterpart in the immediate post-Hiroshima period." Tactics too: "We debate the wisdom of the scare tactics of a Helen Caldicott with little apparent awareness that this very issue was the subject of massive discussion—and some bitter lessons—a generation ago." A large part of Boyer's purpose in digging up this particular past, it seems, is to rescue today's antinuclear movement from repetition of that history. I'd add only that the movement against nuclear war needs not just an awareness of past cycles, attitudes and tactics but an analysis of the social and political forces at work, both then and now. □

Modern Superstitions

BRIAN MORTON

BEHOLD METATRON, THE RECORDING ANGEL. *By Sol Yurick. Semiotext(e). 169 pp. Paper $3.95.*

In one of Sol Yurick's novels, a young innocent stumbles on a plot against the President. A complicated sequence of events leaves him unhinged; he ends up in Bellevue. "They're trying to kill the President," he says. The admitting psychiatrist nods sympathetically and opens her notebook. "Oedipus complex accompanied by delusional psychosis," she writes.

Yurick has always been fascinated by the myths that mask relations of power and prevent a dominated population from understanding its condition. His novels are filled with deluded true believers, passionate adherents of ideologies that leave them incapable of seeing what's in front of their eyes. The same preoccupation is at work in *Metatron*, Yurick's first nonfiction book, in which he explores the emerging ideology of the information age.

Up to now, Freudianism has been the myth he has attacked most vigorously. No Yurick novel would be complete without a psychoanalyst or two tirelessly explaining away social problems by reference to individual neuroses. But with all his hostility to Freud, one has always sensed a wary respect: the respect of one fiction writer for another. He objects to the influence of Freud's fictions, but he respects their imaginative range. The ideology of the information age exasperates him precisely because the fiction it proposes is so reductive: the idea that all knowledge, indeed all reality, can be represented in a binary language, plus and minus, one and zero, yes and no.

But what enrages him even more than the crudity of this fiction is that our lives are being made crude. The information expert's view of human beings may be reductive; but it becomes less and less so as we begin to recognize ourselves in it—to live by it. The world view of the information age seeps into every field. In sociobiology, human beings are seen as mere envelopes for the transmission of genetic messages. In the world of business, information becomes a commodity more important—more real—than any other. In everyday language we speak of how we've been "programmed."

The ideology and technology of the information age, far from representing a break with some obsolete industrial past, are marked by the features of the economic system that brought them into being. The ethos of simplification is amusingly contradicted by the way in

Brian Morton has written for Dissent, Monthly Review *and* The New York Times.

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which computer technology has been developed:

> Different manufacturers . . . while proclaiming one world, one language, one global village . . . fight each other tooth and nail. They erect a maze of priced mediations and product differentiation, countering speed and directness of transmission with profitable labyrinths, in different time-zones, each turn and gate tolled and tariffed. . . . Out of this uniform ur-language has come Babel.

Beyond this, the guiding metaphors of the information age have been the guiding metaphors of capitalism all along. The plus and minus of the binary code correspond to profit and loss on an accountant's ledger; the conceit that all reality can be represented in this code corresponds to the central axiom of capitalist economics: that all labor and all commodities—the most varied kinds of human activity and the most varied products of that activity—can be represented by a single, simple, abstract standard.

Yurick is a Marxist, but a maverick Marxist. Most writers on the left would be satisfied to show that behind the rhetoric of newness, the old forms of domination are at work; once they'd demonstrated this, they'd consider the job done. The most novel strand within *Metatron*, and the most problematic, is Yurick's effort to show that though the technology and ideology of the information age answer to the needs of capitalism, still deeper forces are at work behind this.

Max Weber is never mentioned in *Metatron*, but this part of Yurick's argument can be seen as a debate with Weber's idea that capitalism has fostered the ceaseless rationalization of material and intellectual life. In Yurick's view

> modern rationalization [has] taken a secret rider, an incubus along in its institutional and intellectual baggage. . . . Invisible religions, acts of abject faith, superstition, lurk beneath the most rational mathematical and scientific works.

The relentless quest to simplify, Yurick argues, is peculiar to our culture. He draws on Lévi-Strauss's accounts of the astonishingly complex schemes of classification developed by "primitive" societies; he sets the Hindus, with their "geological strata of explanations," and the Mayans, who "choked their cosmos with Gods," against the Judeo-Christian tradition with its "hunt for *The One*." Yurick believes that this urge to unify, to simplify, which began as a religious impulse, remains a religious impulse, in that it is obsessive, self-verifying and almost unquestioned. So that Weber's rationalization is itself the expression of an irrational impulse.

In Yurick's vision, modern capitalism is as deeply imbued with mysticism as any cargo cult. Even the idea of immortality was never wholly abandoned but transformed into the myth of a "great ascent, a goal-oriented progression of history." (He notes that this myth was accepted even by Marx, who merely assigned it a new hero.) "Perhaps, after all," he writes, "modern capitalism is a great factory for the production of angels."

I've written about *Metatron* as if it were composed of a series of separate arguments; in fact its arguments are intertwined, overlapping, winding through discussions of gene theory, Faust, the cabala, particle physics, Oedipus, black holes and the nature of time. Yurick's desire, as he puts it, is to create a "disunified field theory"; his contempt for rationalization is inscribed in the book's very form.

At times all this makes for forbidding reading. At times, too, Yurick ascends into regions of abstraction where I can't follow . . . I lose him in the mists. Yurick is primarily a novelist: his genius lies in his ability to show what these abstractions mean in people's lives, and I look forward to his next novel, in which many of these themes will undoubtedly be taken up again.

But while we're waiting for his next novel, it's good to have *Metatron*. Yurick's effort to reinterpret the history of just about everything makes for a challenging book. He has the arrogance of the accomplished novelist: the confidence that every area of life and thought is his proper domain. In an era of specialization and subspecialization, this is bracing. Every page of *Metatron* is a provocation. □

GROUNDHOG SEES ITS SHADOW

1

From the window, dead-winter dawn.
Slowly a red without warmth
seeps through cold-flesh blues and grays.
Dull shadows form, throw themselves
full length across the snow, begging
recognition from distorted distance.
Smoke drifts like breath
from sleeping chimneys. What
can be revived? Garden weedstalk spills
its seed over the week-old glaze of snow,
and our most careful words
still wander like floating scars, like
the indifferent, shadowless crow.

2

Unweight. Unweight. Half-formed
thoughts stretch thinly, break
glib and brittle with anaemic freight.
Words, hours, faces, all pale,
crowd into sameness,
and this tedium braces only panic.
Words, especially words, seem nothing
but their letters, scattered,
unfocused, like a hundred
schoolgirls giggling in uniform
idiocy, running from the shadows
of two dark strangers:
articulate rage, speakable grief.

Karen Chamberlain

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FILMS.

ANDREW KOPKIND

The Color Purple

In the cultural economy of Hollywood, *The Color Purple* is a countercyclical event. It is long, complex and ideological in a time when the mass mind is supposed to have a split-second attention span and the comprehension of a newt. It is almost all black, poor, rural and old-fashioned in the face of a popular taste for excessive wealth, white society and cosmopolitan glamour. It projects a sensibility of unremitting feminism, an atmosphere of realism and a pattern of male failure that contradict all the rules for success at the box office. It contains a scene of tender lesbian affection that resists the exploitative and sensationalist aspects with which that subject is usually burdened on the screen. And its stars are so far from bankable that it's hard to believe many of them could get into the Diners Club without an open admissions policy.

But like the best Keynesian gambit designed to counter bad news in the money economy, this Spielbergian gamble in the cultural sweepstakes has paid off handsomely. *The Color Purple* succeeds to a great degree because it runs against the cycle of ideas, images, truths and fears that are currently acceptable, to express ones that lie beneath the trend. Fifteen years ago (that's a very long time in this accelerated age) its flaws would have loomed larger, its compromises would have seemed unnecessary, its pleadings tendentious. Some years hence—who knows when?—it may look laughably dated, because it is too craftily concocted as an anomaly to become a classic. For now, its power comes from its adversary relation to American dreams rather than its celebration of our fantasies.

Steven Spielberg's secret technique in this latest product of his hit factory is to fit the movie into a safe and familiar form to compensate for its difficult and threatening content. He gives it the socko Hollywood treatment, at least as far as is possible given the filmic limitations of Alice Walker's idiosyncratic, uneven, rather dogmatic but widely affecting novel. Extended images of flower-filled fields, African rites of passage, gospel choirs, juke-joint revelry, violence, suffering and birth labor pull heartstrings to breaking and coax tears from the most jaded eyes. The movieness of the movie is emphasized by Spielberg's use of allusions or conceits from his own *oeuvre* and the works of his colleagues. When Celie (Whoopi Goldberg) is finally able to read the letters from her sister that have long been hidden from her, her face is suffused with the same light thrown when boy-meets-alien in *E.T.—The Extraterrestrial*. A scene in the sugar shack where the lively wanton Shug (Margaret Avery) struts her stuff and sings the blues to Celie is an apparent *hommage* to the memorable scene in the intergalactic café in *Star Wars*. The lighting, the blocking, the editing, the use of music all send the message that this is no oddball objet d'art but a legitimate piece of commercial moviemaking.

What's remarkable is that the commercial imperative has done a lot less damage to *The Color Purple* in Spielberg's hands than it has to other important or interesting works of literature brought to the screen by comparable tycoons. There's nothing here so fatuous as the movie version of *The Children's Hour*, in which a heterosexual scandal was substituted for the lesbian one in Lillian Hellman's play. (There's a famous story that has Sam Goldwyn calling his agents in New York shortly after the play opened, to arrange an option. "You can't make this movie," one of them said, "it's about lesbians." "That's O.K.," Goldwyn shot back, "we'll change it and make them Americans!") But there's still a lot to talk about in *The Color Purple*, and perhaps more to worry about. Racial, sexual and, indeed, dramatic questions remain unresolved. Is it fair to have Hollywood's one big black picture in years explore so insistently the pathology of the black family in a time long gone? Is it honest to subordinate the issue of racial oppression to sexism and patriarchy in this day and age? Couldn't the movie have been cut by almost a quarter to concentrate on Celie's life up to the point where she leaves the brutal Mister (Danny Glover) and eliminate the unelaborated references to Africa and the sentimental final scenes of redemption and reconciliation?

I don't think there are obvious answers to such questions. Spielberg's choices in those and attendant matters

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are defensible as well as problematic. That it is possible to discuss the problems—that there are problems to discuss—suggests that *The Color Purple* is a unique oasis in the current Hollywood wasteland. Forget about the *Rocky*s and the *Rambo*s, the teen larks and monster mashes that make up 90 percent of Hollywood's abbreviated output. Even the middlebrow extravaganzas are empty, pretentious and escapist when they are not downright bankrupt. *Out of Africa* was devoid of ideas, *After Hours* was basically mean-spirited, *Lost in America* was lost in Albert Brooks's ego and even *Prizzi's Honor* (the best of that lot) was not much more than an intelligent jape. And that's it for big American movies, unless you think *Santa Claus: The Movie* is worth mentioning. *The Color Purple* is so different in intent and effect that it's hard to believe it was made by this generation of filmmakers.

As Celie, the abused child, battered bride and wounded woman liberated by Shug's kiss and the recognition of sisterhood's power, Whoopi Goldberg is for the most part lovable and believable. She mugs a bit, pouts and postures too long in some scenes and seems to disappear in others, but her great moments are exciting to behold. Three times she almost kills the hated Mister, and three times she spares him, in one way or another; each instance is a small masterpiece of scene construction, acting, lighting, directing.

Danny Glover has the most difficult role in the movie, and does it better, perhaps, than it was written. The obvious strategy of telling the story as a Dickensian novel, with characters of strong affect but little subtlety, presents some obstacles to actors in the modern manner. It also seems to contradict the realistic atmosphere Spielberg needs to convey the sorrows of Celie's life. As a result, *The Color Purple* sometimes seems to slip into the cartoon frame Spielberg uses for his fantasies. But that, after all, is what he's best at, and as my uncle Nate, a famous theater owner of New England, used to say, thank God he can afford it. □

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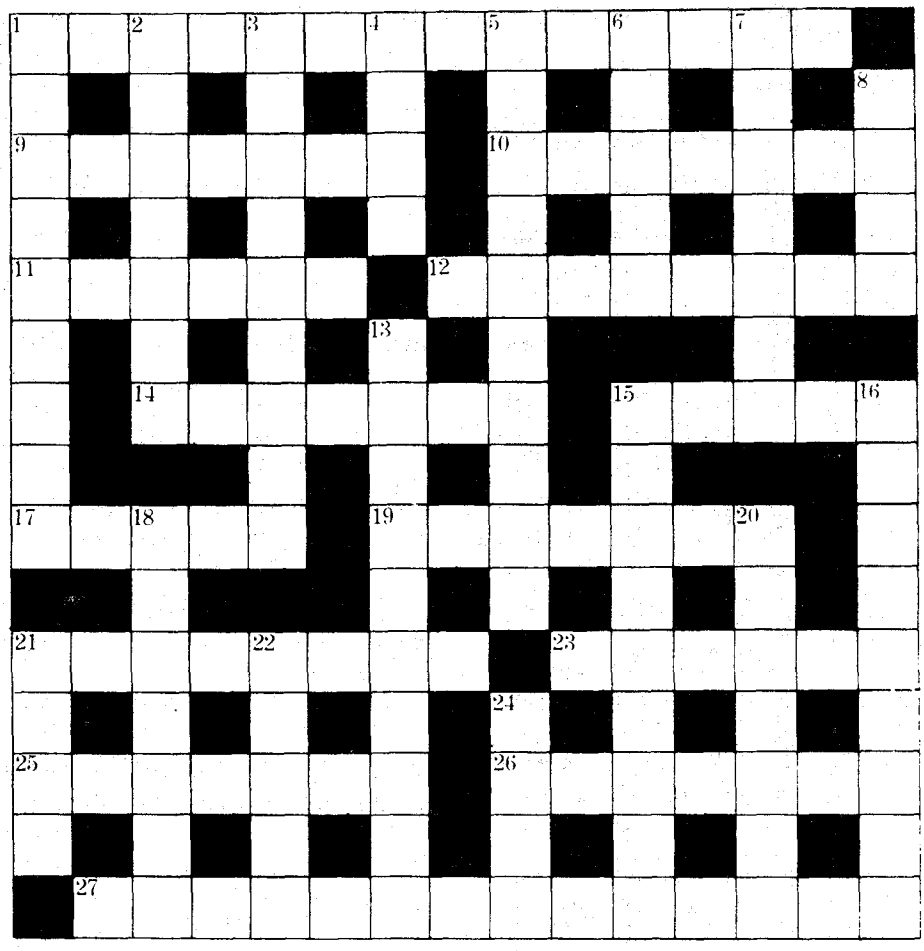

ACROSS

1 Rembrandt's might be, in effect—though they were once silent. (6,8)
9 The railroad is a common one, perhaps, though one might bear germs. (7)
10 They might be destined for hanging, and the unruly crowd lies in disorder to see such. (7)
11 Said to be a comer on the stage? (6)
12 Alert just before them, perhaps—but people might be not so quick afterwards. (3,5)
14 Little time for support, in case of fight. (7)
15 A back-view pose displayed by the storyteller. (5)
17 Did he show the best of a certain type of music—or possibly the evils thereof? (5)
19 Can't one really see such fighters? (Migs are different, but similar.) (7)
21 A human being, albeit aged, has plenty—as part of the car, perhaps. (8)
23 Youth's a stuff will not, according to the bard. (6)
25 Is such a cane straight, by the sound of it? (7)
26 Mr. Baba, sort of dead, but capable of getting you a fix. (7)
27 Do these keep nothing from being soiled? (6,8)

DOWN

1 Contrive to confuse the maniac! (9)
2 More than one old rascal travels with some difficulty! (7)
3 You might be liable to have common ones. (The answer is surrounded by shades of meaning.) (9)
4 Shown by an unhappy relict, where she might have been very unhappy at one time. (4)
5 A little company has Miss Mary only slightly disturbed, but there may be something in store here. (10)
6 Numbers shouldn't have extreme points of color. (5)
7 You might find this is clear, yet entirely unclear—but they might go down well. (7)
8 A little relative, but in no condition to quibble about. (2,2)
13 Where Orwell put Napoleon first. (6,4)
15 Tearing an ABC member into pieces. (9)
16 It would be hard to put a tag on such things. (9)
18 Following the leader, one gets sick with a sort of ice cream. (7)
20 Ground hog? (It's good the country has a wise man around!) (7)
21 Perhaps Mother and me like Auntie on the stage. (4)
22 In a terrific hurry? You probably won't wear one! (5)
24 Dance round, probably. (4)

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She'll tell you how painful, dirty, humiliating, and horribly dangerous a back-alley abortion was.

But despite the incredible risks, millions of American women had abortions before they were legalized nationwide in 1973. An untold number were maimed for life. Thousands were literally slaughtered, packed off bleeding and infected to die in abject terror.

Today the threat to women's lives and health no longer comes from abortion. It comes from those who want to outlaw it. People who argue that abortions should be banned—even if the result will be as horrifying as it was in the past.

This increasingly vocal and violent minority will stop at nothing. They've resorted to harassment, physical threats, and even bombings. They're attacking the Constitution. And they're pressuring lawmakers to make abortion illegal again—for all women. Regardless of circumstances. Even if her life or health is endangered. Even if she's a victim of rape or incest. Even if she's too young to be a mother.

Speak out now. Use the coupon. Or they just might succeed in turning back the clock to when women had no choice. But the back-alley.

The decision is yours.

☐ I've written my representatives in Congress to tell them I support: government programs that reduce the need for abortion by preventing unwanted pregnancy; and keeping safe and legal abortion a choice for all women.

☐ Here's my tax-deductible contribution in support of all Planned Parenthood activities and programs: ☐ $25 ☐ $35 ☐ $50 ☐ $75 ☐ $150 ☐ $500 or: $_____

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